The Cenacle

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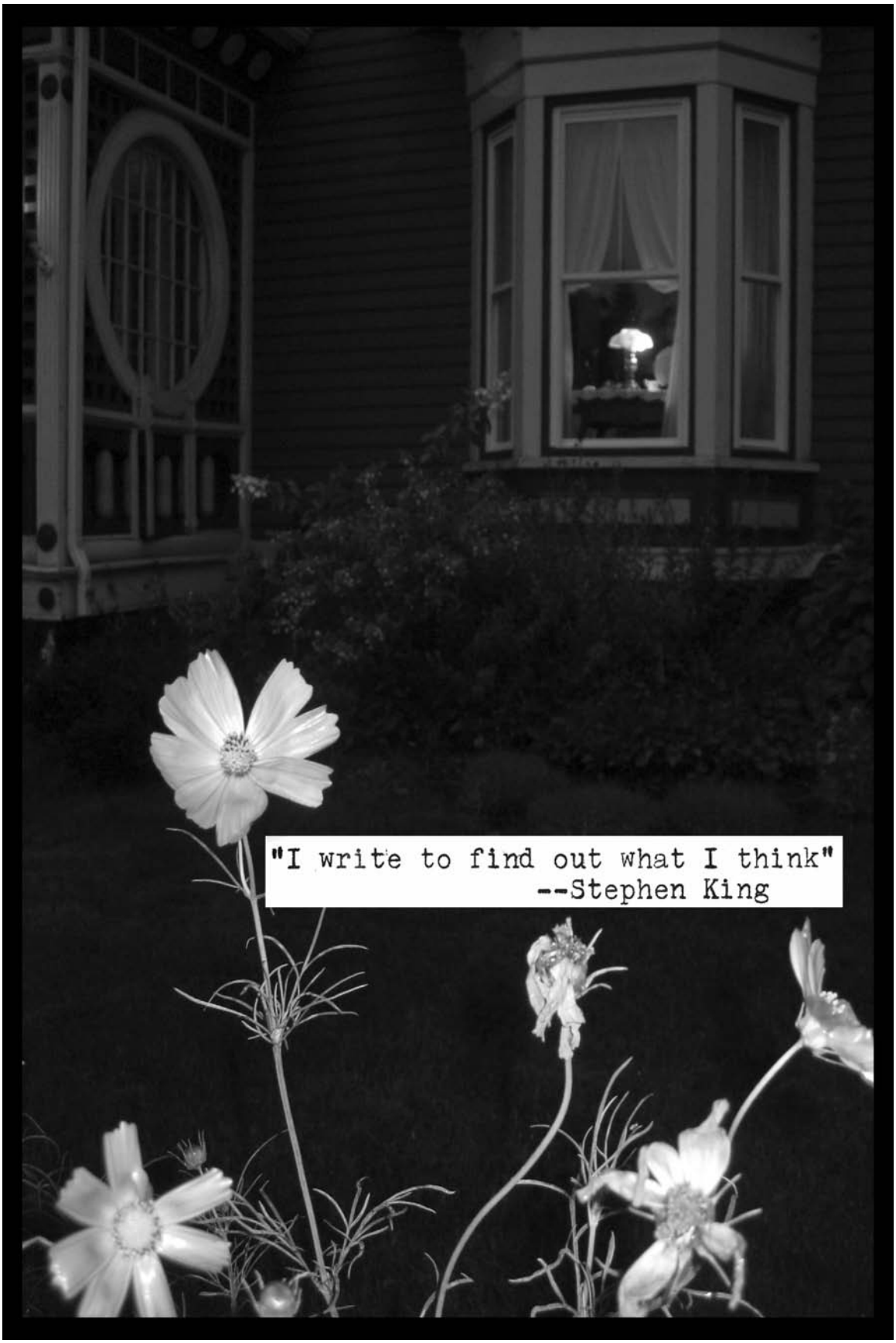
"I write to find out what I think"
--Stephen King

Letter to President Barack Obama

October 24, 2010
Gourmet Express – my table
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dear President Obama,

This is the fourth in a series of letters I have been writing to you since 2008, when you were running for the Democratic Party's nomination for President, & I'd decided to support you publicly (for me this was in the pages of my independent literary journal, *The Cenacle*).

As I write to you this time, the mid-term Congressional elections are hardly days away. There are widespread predictions that the Democrats will lose control of one or both chambers of Congress—or retain one or both by narrow margins. Tis said that progressive voters are disillusioned with your presidency—unwilling to fight for you now as they did in 2008 because of a feeling that you have let us down. Too willing to compromise, too unwilling to lay down a principled stand & swing on through the firestorm of opposition led by Republicans, conservative Democrats, & the many corporate interests in the mainstream media.

I've been trying to cohere where I stand regarding your presidency. Your recent interview in *Rolling Stone* touted gains, counseled patience, urged a renewed commitment to fight on, now more than ever. Your comments implied that the bastards would love progressives to despair & stay home. I suppose this observation struck me more than the many other things you said. You said, in essence: *Look at the bigger picture, the longer view of matters.* That's where I will direct the bulk of my thoughts here.

Whatever happens in early November, I believe the next two years, in terms of meaningful governance from Washington, D.C., is a wash. You will make moves to aid the economy & to improve the U.S.'s relations in the world—your opponents will resist & denounce, & distort, & resist some more. By next year you will be shifting into re-election mode &, while I believe you will be able to defeat Sarah Palin or whatever weird-eyed ghoul the Republicans nominate, I wonder how the federal government can ever undo from the inglorious muck of intractable special interests which has moved it closer & closer to complete paralysis. I wonder this knowing many people of various political stripes would not object to such a scenario.

But . . . the big picture. The longer view. The nearly-impossible position you were put in in 2008 was to recover this country from George W. Bush's catastrophically destructive eight years of financial deregulation combined with hugely inept military adventurism. He left office with everything burning or already burned down. You urged us to look to the sky & stars, or at least the horizon, when we collectively stood deep in a hole.

Honestly, I think your administration made one crucial mistake early on: you assumed that the millions of people who voted to send you to the White House, whose lives & livelihoods were being devastated in 2008, had anything in common with most of the people (politicians, lobbyists, media, etc.) who run the government. You vowed to work with them on our behalf & while you managed to stave off a full financial collapse, it was not because these D.C. interests cooperated—it was because you had enough momentum early on to push through them.

This same early momentum allowed you to win a modest healthcare reform victory, an end to combat operation in Iraq (admittedly not an actual victory in Congress), & a shifting in policy toward alternative energy & financial reform. But what was evident was that each victory cost too much, took too long, yielded too moderate fruit—& slowed & drained that momentum more & more. So even as you can list gains on both hands & more, we stand just days from your party's mild-to-disastrous reprimand at the hands of the nation's voters. Not because the conservatives have discovered their missing brilliance, their absent empathy for the vast majority of the population—quite contrary, because their thrill for political bloodsport has blotted your simple desire to do good & help people.

Big picture? Long view? *Take the gloves off*, sir. Democracy as it plays out these days is two men in a ring, each sporting to knock down the other, claim the belt. Yours is not to make the laws—that's Congress—, or to interpret their Constitutionality—that's the Supreme Court. Your job is to steer the ship of state—personify its mind, its heart, its sense of history & intention both. Your job is not, in truth, to be a Democrat or Republican. Your job is to stand apart in D.C. on behalf of your millions of fellow citizens across the land. When we suffer needlessly—as so many of us are right now—or do not benefit from competent, if not visionary governance, you are failing us. Not Congress, not the media, not the lobbyists, not the vampires in suits & smiles around you—your job is to protect *us*. Those you move among there can fall in line behind your leadership on this truth, or you are morally & legally obliged to push them aside.

Big picture, long view? This country has been in trouble a long time, even as day by day it functions for now. Many hold the two-party system to much account, & I tend to agree with this, to a point. But here is where I see your greatest potential to lie: as first citizen of the nation.

First Citizen is not a king but a simple, powerful individual whose prime obligation is to act & speak on behalf of his fellow citizens. Make decisions mindful of those most vulnerable, least vested with coffers & influence & options.

I doubt not you agree with this in principle, & selected practice, but what I urge upon you, sir, is a greater sense of its absolute necessity when the pressure to conciliate to the bastards is greatest upon you. Some victories will taste sweet; others will simply cost too much.

If I could urge one thing upon you, it would be this: gain back the higher ground you have been ceding. Fight your way back. This country must see again the better angels of your—& its own—nature. Be willing to lose a few battles in the name of winning the War. The faith lost in the possibility of the government acting rightly & decently is a greater threat than any single piece of legislation. I urge you, in sum, to govern more fearlessly, & to lead again with the hope you once shined upon millions of faces.

Respectfully,

Raymond Soulard, Jr.
Scriptor Press New England

The Cenacle

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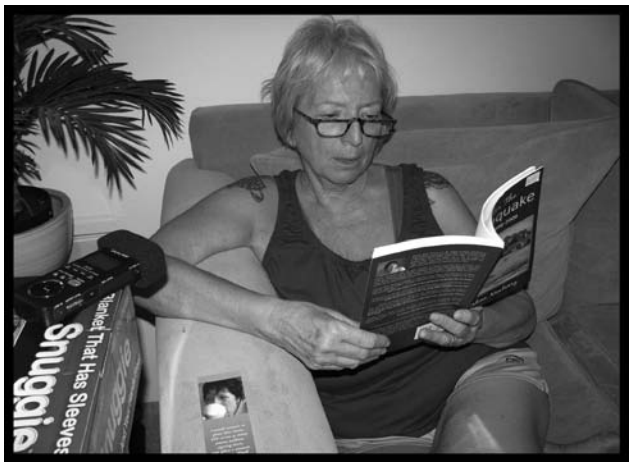
Roll with the Changes:
Poet Martina Newberry
Interviewed by Judih Haggai

Martina Newberry was born in Upland, California, and is currently living in Palm Springs, California. Martina's recent published books of poetry include What We Can't Forgive *and* Late Night Radio.



Judih: How would you describe yourself as a poet?
Martina: I am an *accessible* poet. In my work, I try to give the reader a new way of seeing, experiencing, or relating to things around them. It doesn't even have to be MY way of seeing, but I'd like to think my poems could be a springboard to those things.

J: Do you have a favorite spot for writing?
M: I have two favorite spots: one is in my office at my desk. I'm surrounded there by books and personal effects of all kinds. I love my simple black table/desk and my worn office chair. I have all my notebooks—old and new—and favorite kinds of pens, etc. The other place I like to write i
s a coffee shop in Los Angeles. Not a famous place, just a nice little place that smells of coffee and pastries and sandwiches.

J: Do you prefer to write longhand or by computer?
M: Everything begins in a notebook in longhand for me. When a poem is nearly finished, I put in on the computer and do editing there.

J: How did you get started?
M: I'm an only child, no brothers or sisters. My parents were a bit older than my peers' parents, so I was expected to entertain myself for the most part. I was also painfully shy (still am) so I didn't play with other kids much. I learned to read when I was three years old and began to write when I was four. I got my first diary (journal) when I was seven years old. I've always written stories and poems and things I wanted to remember.

J: Have you ever been involved in writing workshops? Either as a participant or as a teacher?
M: I've done both. I've been a participant and a facilitator. The best workshops for me were the ones in which no one tried to *teach* me to write. They were workshops that gave me new perceptions and ways of looking at the world and then writing about it. When I facilitate a workshop, that's what I try to do.

J: Who has inspired you over the years?
M: I met an incredible poet, Larry Kramer (now passed) in 1985. He became my friend, brother, mentor, teacher, spiritual guide (though he would kill me for saying that). He also gifted me with a beautiful little whippet named Clementine (also passed). We wrote together many times. He was my best critic, my best editor. He wrote two books: one was part of the *Quarterly Review of Literature Series*, and his last book, *Brilliant Windows*. I like to think that my writing resembles his.

J: Do you have a method to your writing that you could share?
M: It starts with coffee—big mug of my husband's incredible coffee with whipped cream on top. I usually read something to begin—poetry, fiction, non-fiction—anything that has recently interested me. After that, I look at what I wrote the day before. I re-write, edit, do another re-write, or, I like what I see and leave it alone to begin something new. I'm a morning person and start writing early in the morning until late afternoon. I drink coffee and juice and Diet Coke and diet root beer all through the day.

J: Do you listen to music while you work? If so, who or what kind?
M: Sometimes I do. My favorite writing music is traditional Chinese and Japanese music. I have a couple of CDs of operatic arias that I love and I listen to those too. I love rock and roll, but I start dancing around instead of writing with it.

J: Do you feel it important to be political in your work?
M: If you live in this world, I think politics in one form or another will touch you. I can't help but be moved by what goes on or doesn't go on here on our planet, so, yes, some of my work is political. I guess everyone can define what he or she means by *politics* but, for me, there are certain things that I am pursued by and that I pursue—things I feel I have to write about.

J: Which subjects in your life stir you—which social issues you feel are most urgent to deal with?
M: The subjects that stir me are those things which separate us: male vs. female, white vs. black, Muslim vs. Christian or Buddhist or Roman Catholic, war, heterosexuality vs. homosexuality, youth vs. aging. I am tired to the point of agony of humankind not coming together to at least try to understand each other and, if unable to understand, leave each other to pursue life in our own ways. War is no longer an option on this planet to my way of thinking. It has to stop and it has to stop now. It comes down to individuals saying, "I will not train to kill nor kill my fellow man any longer for the political desires of any leaders of any country."

What moves me? So many things: I write about what faces the average human being in just living each and every day without too much pain or too much stress or too much anger

and the urgency and challenge of coping with those things. I write about the comparisons between the huge things that make us happy and the small things that make us sad. My words call to women to dance out their lives, not drag through them; sing out their anger and lust and sensuality, not hide these things under ladylike, lowered eyelids. My poems call to men to see more, see further, be more and better and, again, more. I write about expectations and our ability to fulfill them or fail to do the same.

I write about relationships—the cruel, the complicated, the simple, the joyful, the sexy, the fearful, the painful, the intense. I write about what can go wrong, what does go wrong, how much beatings hurt and how much kisses heal. I write about the terrors and wonder of childhood, the terrors and wonder of aging. I write about sexuality between two women, a man and a woman, partnerships and marriages.

I write about music, dancing, reading, aging, cooking, sex, and/or the lack of it. I write about how, in these simple things, fear can destroy the mind and the feelings of anyone. I write about the intimidation of our peers, the strengths of our friends, the power of our enemies. I write about war and insects and the smell of clean clothes.

I write about God—how "we pray to a God we do not love for those we do love." I write about churches, priests, confessions, weddings and funerals. I write to and about a God we look for and seldom find. I write about my mother who was mad and my father who was not. I write about madness and how it can be contagious to those who come in contact with it.

J: Is poetry a tool for therapy in your own life?
M: Well, I don't know if I could say *therapy*. I've gone to places inside myself that I did *not* want to visit and brought poems and stories from those places, but that hasn't always been *therapeutic*. It has sometimes been awful and frightening and sad. But, I continue to do that to make poems.

J: How can a poet work to become better?
M: By reading and writing and writing and writing. By growing personally, by constantly learning and talking with people and seeing new things. I think you're a better poet when you allow yourself to be jolted out of your comfort zone. Talk to people you might not ordinarily talk with, eat foods you aren't familiar with, try different clothes and perfume and walk or take the bus nearly everywhere instead of driving the car. Then write some more.

J: Who are your favorite poets?
M: Not in order of importance: Allen Ginsberg, Larry Kramer, Djelloul Marbrook, Andrew Hudgins, Robert Frost, Adrienne Rich, Norman Dubie, Dorothy Baressi, Charles Bukowski, Raymond Carver, Robert Lowell, Mary Oliver, Michael Wilds . . . and more. You, Ms. Judih, have become a favorite of mine.

J: Do you think that writing poetry is a talent that can be learned?
M: I think that some people were just born knowing how to write well, but that doesn't mean one would have to be born to it. I think there are ways of feeling things and seeing/experiencing things that can be encouraged. Whether or not someone wants to write those things down is such an individual choice.

* * *

Martina Newberry

The Other Side of Panic

It begins
with the desert's hot sky,
mendacious
as always,
alchemizing grief and loathing
into love stories.
Here is the other side of panic:
a dug-in-deep
lethargy
that makes your
marrow itch.
Anyway,
the desert underwrites
your soul's story.
You become
untethered from yourself
which may
or
may not
be a good thing.
Such intricacy!
People in the sand
looking for closure
as if there was such an animal.

"We'll do this
so we can have
closure,"
they say when
what they mean is
they want every gory detail.
They want to smell and taste
the who/what/where/when/why
in each sanctification
of violence.
I dream a lot
in this desert.
My dreams
turn to fish line
which I use
to sew what is real
to what is not.

* * *

Stone Steps

I don't want to go to people's parties anymore.
We have rented a second-floor apartment
with stone steps and a stone balcony,
looking over the courtyard.
I don't want to disturb the hummingbirds
at our feeder
by opening the door
to go out for "How-do-you-do's"

and "I'd-love-another-drink."
We have rented this apartment, you see,
and I want to wander around it silently,
thinking of poems, finding misplaced items.
Two weeks ago,
the blind man on the first floor died.
His name was Albert.
He went out every day for a walk

around the swimming pool
and look what it got him!
He's dead.
I don't think I like
people's parties anymore.
They make me feel
like a too-large child,
pretending to know

the right things to say or do.
I want to wander
the catacombs of my head,
learn calligraphy,
French,
history of the paintings of the Dutch Masters.
I don't want to
remember how it was.

I want only to see what might be.
My heart is breaking
at people's parties.
Sexual desire
whistles the same tunes
as sexual decay
when the conversations turn to love.
And, after all,

what is there left to talk about
after the politics of war,
the ethical poses of religions,
the egregiously bad behavior
of the new movie legends?
I'm quite satisfied thinking
of your ankles touching mine
beneath our sheets.

I'm happy seeing the wind
harass the palm trees.
I like the taste of chocolates,
potato chips, and ice cream
more than the taste of wine or gin.
The days are becoming
thick with indifference.
How can I live like this?

* * *

Your Poems on My Patio
for Djelloul Marbrook

The mountains are perfect
this morning so I re-read
your perfect poems.
Knit two, purl three,
knit two, purl three
and there on the page
is a scarf in hearty woolen
adverbs and adjectives.

I would do nearly anything
to know that someone
lingered over my images
as I do yours and
I would do it twice to find
you'd borrowed
one of my phrases.
You must know that

your poems, so beautiful they
are treacherous, paralyze my pen.
Oh, I realize this isn't
an appropriate way
to show gratitude, nor is it
an answer to my reflection
in the cracked mirror
of my own regrets.

Yes, I am tired,
and even the surreal sky,
even the spirit-filled mountains
don't rouse me to action.
I read instead—read
Your poems and sip at
a Mimosa because it's
never too early for champagne

This morning, my friend,
I found autumn
and the sea,
and terror and love
and wonder and pain
and such enviable
nourishment
that I can never forgive you.

* * *

Palette

The silences of moments
don't support me
like they used to.

Heartbeats,
like the dingdong of bells,
pass through me

and don't stay.
It's embarrassing
the way living in a near-deserted town

embarrasses the few who stay on.
Love threatens me.
Faith comes at me

like a grimy rag,
wants to scour my face.
My clasped hands

render clear blood,
but not a clear mind
and the surrounding desert's song

is monotonous
even when the coyotes kick in.
Desert sand keeps nothing out,

holds nothing in.
My gestures look tranquil,
feel frantic

I've tossed my reflection
into noon's white heat
which clings

like silica spider webs,
adjusts hue without color.
At night, I lie awake,

my body dirtied by
unrecountable dreams.
When it's dawn

something reclaims me
and I move
toward the excesses of light.

* * *

What Madness Is

Madness is anger's placenta,
a thorny cord that strangles,
a finger that writes "no more" in death's fluids.

Madness is this confession: *I have encountered my enemy.*
I wanted to set fire to my enemy. I wanted to perform
unnatural acts on my enemy.

Madness is a dream in the morning—of transitory waters
and the ruby blood of *I love you* moving between
the tired legs of a tired woman.

Madness is that white mania that leaps from stony heart
to stony heart, turns the universal mysteries into
fishhooks and phantasms.

Straight out of the black sea comes the madness of Amen,
the madness of allure, of sex that cripples your senses
(it is that vigorous).

Madness is the tight knot of wisdom and hatred
and, later, ecstasy of a kind
known only to the saints.

Anarchic and unassuming, madness brings
a coward's blades to the throats
of the world's inquisitors.

Madness is no vindication. No escape plan.
Only these words, clenching inside you
like fists, like teeth, like closed eyes.

* * *

A Thousand Signs

I have been naked in soul and body
with women whose names escape me. I have

shared my body's portfolio with men
whose hearts were too heated to resonate

anything but a divine urgency.
It makes me wonder: is love a sickbed?

Can we love ourselves only if we see
our lust for others as disease? I am

drawn to an impossible point of light,
a sign outside my national language.

I am free to read it. I am free to
view the wreckage of a thousand signs in

a thousand places. I have seen the light:
men who love men are splotches of sunlight

in the shadows that cross the deck. Women
who love women are rivers of questions

on a desert planet. The rest of us
tremble, intend to be happy, take love

back from the bold ones who have sheltered it.
In the end, we are all caught, made to walk

the gangplank. In the end, every night is
All Hallow's Eve. The gilded sky covers

all of us and, regardless of choices,
We all take it hard when we die

* * * * * *

Horse Lampner

Hook, Line, and Sinker

[Fiction]

It was a slow day even for January. Twenty past noon and not one sale. John was alone in the store. Bill, the other salesman, was out to lunch. The two of them had been marking jewelry all morning. John walked to the front of the store and looked out the front-door window. The rain was just letting up. Across the street he saw a cop ticketing an out-of-state car. "Well, somebody's got to suffer," he thought to himself. The cop appeared to be the only sign of life on Union Street.

John walked back to the desk, picked up an invoice, and started back to work. He saw that a man and a woman had stopped outside and were looking over the window displays. He could see the man pointing to something and the woman shaking her head. The man started to open the door, but the woman pulled at his sleeve and was still shaking her head. They were talking loud, but John couldn't make out just what they were saying.

He thought, "You coming in, or ain't you?"

The door opened and the two came in. They had stopped talking and paused just inside the door. John dropped the invoice he was working on and walked toward them.

"Looks like it's clearing up, don't it?" The two didn't answer. "Something I can show you folks?"

"We'd like some luggage," the man said.

Hardly had he spoken when the woman said, "We're only looking."

John figured it out fast. He knew he could sell the man easy. It was that damn woman he'd have to work on.

He smiled and addressed the woman. "Was it something you wanted to match up, or are you making up a new set?"

"No, we just want to see a bag."

John thought to himself, "In that case, lady, just step over here to the mirror." He started to walk to the back of the store. They followed. That was a good sign.

"Have you any particular color or leather in mind?"

"No, a man's bag in something cheap," the woman answered.

John looked quickly over the stock. There was a two-bit commission on any piece of luggage he sold and another two bits on anything over a year old. Still eyeing the stock, John asked, "What size did you have to have? Something in a two-suiter, perhaps?"

The man turned to the woman. "Is that what we want?"

"Yes," the woman said. "Let me see that one up there." She was pointing to one of the high-priced bags, but John took it down anyway.

"How much is that?"

"I'll check on that. Let me open it and look at the price tag."

John knew what the price was but figured the longer be could hold them, the better he

could work on them. "That's sixty-five dollars plus the tax, ma'am."

"Put it back," the woman said.

John spotted an old blue plastic case edged with leather. It had been in the store since the war.

"Here's one that's been very popular. All the edges are real leather and it's got real brass hardware. Here, look at the name stamped on the lock," he said, handing the bag to the man. "See, it's stamped 'Empire.' You know that name, of course?" ("If you do, I'll eat the goddamn thing," he thought to himself.)

The man just nodded his head.

"Is that a man's suitcase?" the woman asked.

"Oh, yes, ma'am." That was a lie, but he felt sure he could handle it. "The manufacturers are making men's and ladies' stuff a lot alike these days. It's the style."

The woman looked at him a little suspiciously. John thought, "Maybe I better watch my step with this old gal."

"How much is it?"

"That's seventeen ninety-five, ma'am."

"Haven't you anything cheaper?"

"Not in a man's two-suiter. Perhaps I could show you something smaller."

John reached for another bag, plastic and slightly smaller, but pretty near as old as the one he was showing them. He knew the price tag was missing, and he knew the price—twelve dollars—but he took another chance, thinking if he upped the price on this suitcase, they'd be more likely to take the blue one.

"That's sixteen dollars, ma'am. It's not the size you want, but it's cheaper." He placed the two suitcases side by side, opened, on the counter. The woman shut and opened both bags a couple of times.

John picked up the blue one and said, "You know, there isn't too much difference in the price. If I were you folks, I'd take this one, 'cause it's the size you want, and in the long run that's what counts. However, this other one is still a good buy at the price." He wished he hadn't upped the price, fearing if they took it because they couldn't swing the blue one, he'd be in for it for overcharging.

The woman pointed to the smaller bag. "How much would this one be with tax?"

Now he was damn sorry he'd lied. "Just a minute. I'll figure it out for you." He calculated the price on the inside flap of his sales book. "Nineteen fifty-two with all the taxes, ma'am."

Then he thought of a way out. "Are you folks from town here?" he asked the man.

"No, we come down from Springfield."

"Well, say—if you folks really like the blue bag, I can fix it up so that you won't have to pay any taxes, you being out of state and all."

At this the woman took a real interest. "Then what would be the full price on it?"

John felt he had them now. "Seventeen ninety-five, ma'am. And I can put your initials on it for you. Won't cost you anything, either, ma'am."

The woman opened and shut the bag again, turned to the man and asked him how he liked it. He just shook his head yes.

"You say these edges are real leather?" the woman asked.

John assured her that they were, and that even though the bag was plastic, it would

out-wear some leathers—and besides, one had to look close to tell that it wasn't all leather.

"Well, we'll take it," the woman said. "Can you put the initials on it now?"

"Surely. Take about five minutes, ma'am."

"That will be fine." The woman opened her pocketbook, took out the change purse, and handed him two tens. "You said seventeen ninety-five?"

"That's right, ma'am," John said, taking the money. "Getting so these ten-dollar bills ain't going to buy anything, the way prices keep on going up."

The pair nodded in agreement.

John wrote out the sales slip, marked it with a Z, the store code for year-old merchandise, and rung it up. He initialed the bag and asked if he could show them anything else, to which they said no. John handed the bag to the man and gave the woman the change.

As they were going out, he said, "Now, any time you folks want to match up that bag, you just drop in and we'll fix you up." ("Fix you up good," he thought to himself.)

After they left, John lit up a cigarette, went back to the desk, and began putting price tickets on some silver pins. About that time Bill, the other salesman, came in.

"Sell anything while I was gone, John?"

"Yeah," said John without looking up from his work. "That old blue plastic bag that's been hanging around here since the year one."

"What did you do, use a gun?"

"Naw, I just gave them the old line and they fell for it hook, line, and sinker."

Bill took off his coat and hung it on a nail driven into the edge of one of the shelves. "Talking about lines, I heard a good one at lunch."

"For making women or money?"

"Money. Ed Parker, the hat salesman from Springfield, was telling about a man and woman, acting like they didn't know from nothing, loaded that town with phony tens, and—"

"Bill—"

"No!"

"Yes!"

* * * * * *

Ric Amante

Wind Chime Lines

Here's the drill, boys—
your current mission
is to absorb the notes of sunlight.
I need you all to stop and just listen
to the hanging tubes of metal
as they knock against the wooden ring.
Need you to feel how the wind
is but the sun once removed,
the sun but a star marking time,
and you, empty voyagers,
random, beautiful receptors
of one immeasurable song.

* * *

For Zannemarie

I pressed her water-beaded breasts
close to my chest as she stepped out of the shower.
There she was first thing in the morning
clear eyes pulsing wet skin flushed
fresh from the steam surely a lily
at the very least a goddess
at the utmost a mystery and blessing.
What fate places in your arms will humble you,
she said to me through heartbeat.
I enveloped her like the softest towel.

The world will try to slice you
into cold pieces of disbelief,
yet is there a more beautiful sight
than your lover naked, radiant, restored?
A clasp before the bathroom mirror,
her flesh warm and fragrant,
my shirt damp and happy—
this may not stop the coming dark,
but it does give us a running start
to move right in and through it.

* * *

Find That Machine

Back up in the hills
there's rumor of an old ego collider—
a circular tunnel of glacial granite
smooth and quietly cool,
entrance at the base
of a stand of red sumac.
Here protons of selfhood accelerate, smash, and transform
in a subterranean merry-go-round
until desire and the power to crush it
break out in a new particle.
You have finally left the building.
And now the dart of a bird, crawl of an ant,
heavy green toss of oak leaves
brushing up against a too-blue sky
are all amulet, ally, miracle.
Every few years someone stumbles out of these woods—
broken grin flashing,
sunspots pulsing and flaring within.
Every moment now gifted and unnamed,
incomprehensible in wonder and woe—
the walk to work and the work of love
one and the same and not yours.
Everything stripped away
nothing to hang anything onto—
what a relief to not have to care about
what you think
you would like
to have happen.

* * *

The People vs. Buddha

Drunk on the wine, the emptiness, the caring,
our ship of blood embarks its battered port,
coursing arteries north, veins south
to the silent canals of the fingers,
where a bright red drop wells up on one tip,
pricked by the sadness of time.

In still and cool museum halls sits the Buddha—
magnificent, sturdy, calm—emanating eternity.
His upturned bronze palms lie bloodless
under harsh halogen glare—
carry the shadows of wrongs,
fashion the hands to forgiveness.
Beneath his full gaze we crumble.

Or sputter, drift, reform.
Ride the crests, weather the troughs, chase the moonlight—
forever stuck at the wheel.

For you one evening it all fell away.
Under your tree you stopped pursuing,
even as you ran down the hillside.

And we, too, seldom and brief,
watch it all without clamor unfold.
Sail out, free and open,
leaving our name at the shoreline.

Yet our ship of blood will snag again
on tides of memory and desire,
and not today, not yet, not until
we chose to ditch this mortal craft
will we join you in the voyage.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

"Think for yourself
& question authority."
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Fifteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 68 | April 2009

This year's account has been awhile in coming—delayed in part, I think, by my reluctance to grapple with 2008. Its highs begat lows begat middlings. It was a hard ride many others took, from the relative security of a full-time job, a reasonable income, to the sudden, profoundly sudden, experience of an anonymous bean counter's axe, & the plainest, nearest of explanations as to how badly George W. Bush & his criminal cabal had raped the United States—& walked away unprosecuted, even still admired by many, *even still admired by many of their victims*.

So, not an easy tale to tell. Even the near-miraculous election to the U.S. presidency of Barack Obama was mixed, for me, with coincidental personal misfortune. I was still thrilled shitless that he won the election. But the consequences of the past eight years did not go away; everything spilled out, the body politic nearly collapsed of its own disease & abuse.

For Scriptor Press, I see 2008, as indicted, in thirds. From January to June, Kassi & I enjoyed the fact of our arrival in Portland, steady work, settling in, making plans. I worked my job at Symantec Corp. remotely, which means I was loaned a laptop computer & worked at home—or, in my case, out of the local Starbucks café. Technical writer/editor work usually pays well, & is appreciated. So upon this stability, I was able to look around at Portland from solid ground I had not known while living here in 2002-2003. Had that solid ground remained, events would have gone otherwise than they did.

Politics dominated America culture like not in a long while. The ascendance of Barack Obama in 2008 to major candidate for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination shook shit up hard. The remaining hard-clinging crusts of racism came out in a thousand ways: rumors that Obama was not an American citizen, was in fact an Islamic terrorist, etc. etc. were lobbed over & over as the man's cool, clear rhetoric & clear-belled thinking early in the year trumped Hillary Clinton's careless presumption, & later on John McCain's deeply cynical choice of hillbilly hottie Governor Sarah Palin for his Republican ticket's running mate.

What's funny looking back—funny in a painful, fucked-up way—is that George W. Bush unwittingly engineered Obama's election. The de-regulated & decimated financial markets collapsed days before Election Day, & McCain doddered in his indecision about what to do, how to speak against his own party's culpability. I think of Humphrey's too-late break with Johnson's Vietnam policy in 1968 that let Richard Nixon win.

There was a day, Election Day, when the world felt hopeful again, everything was possible, wishes came true. George W. Bush's clumsy assault on the world as a whole, & the human race in particular, was over. And it was. But the scars remained, & many iniquitous motherfuckers liked things as they'd become. Put simpler, damage heals imperfectly & only with a lot of work & time.

I participated in the politics of the year with fervor, & devoted my pen & press to the progressive cause. I felt, many felt, part of change, of movement toward light & reason & inclusion. These were heady days even as many stumbled, or were pushed, & stumbled. But I, we, kept going. Even still, 2008's crazed juices jump within me, & others too, still insist on inspiring again & again. New hope raised up from long-time despair can be like that. I put my work on the line, attending to the passing political events with close scrutiny & frequent response. It mattered, & mattered, & mattered.

It was a year of both continuity & revival for Scriptor Press. I had been wanting to do more for a while, use the solid ground I keep mentioning here to good purpose. The first project it occurs to me to tell of is my radio show, "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution," webcasting on SpiritPlants Radio (http://spfradio.yage.net). The only show, in fact, on SpiritPlants Radio for several years & throughout most of 2008. Volunteer projects like this one see participants come & go; everyone else had gone**.** I didn't think I could do anything about this really but simply keep my show going. "Within's Within" hit its 9th anniversary in late January & I was grateful.

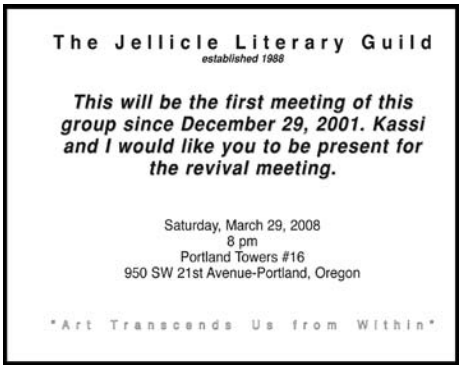
I broadcast my three-hour show 36 times a year, about thrice a month, & have maintained this rate for quite a few years. Additionally, I slowly built up the radio show's online archives. Moved these archives a few times during the year, finally settling them at a site called Heart Drive where they could be downloaded or streamed.

Since my show had been the only one on the station for so long, I pretty well accepted it. Finding good music & reading materials to fill three hours well, three times a month, was fine by me. I had few listeners but not none. Mostly, I did & still do it because I like my show. It's fun. It matters. It combines my love of music, radio, reading to an audience, & a wish to do something additional to my writing. It also provided me with a platform for advocating on behalf of the legitimacy of psychedelics.

Then a twist in things & it seemed like I had no choice: re-invent the station or lose it. In November, I found myself no longer just a DJ of a show but a station manager (more on that later).

One of the benefits of moving from Seattle to Portland was that we had some local friends again, most met at the Burning Man festival or through related associations. I decided it was time to revive the Jellicle Literary Guild, dormant since its most recent meeting in December 2001. On the one hand, its 13-year run had been a good one, a miracle really, in that the group was conceived in the obscurities of central Connecticut in the late 1980s, a pre-cyberspace time where whoever & whatever was nearby was who & what one had to work with. Yet conceived it was, & bloomed it did, & I remembered it with both sentiment &

yearning. I wanted to revive it, try again, & see if it was an idea viable & flexible enough for a new locale, with new people, in the new cyberspace era.


The Jellicle Literary Guild
established 1988

This will be the first meeting of this group since December 29, 2001. Kassi and I would like you to be present for the revival meeting.

Saturday, March 29, 2008
8 pm
Portland Towers #16
950 SW 21st Avenue-Portland, Oregon

"Art Transcends Us from Within"

Of course I had no Roma Restaurant to invite people to, like back when, so Kassi & I decided to open up our apartment for the gathering. We set out food, arrange our living room comfortably, timed the meetings to the release of Scriptor Press publications (*Cenacle*, Burning Man Books, *Scriptor Press Sampler*) so everyone who came would leave with something good in hand. I sent out postcard invitations like old, but also companion email invitations; in place of recording the meetings by cassette tape, I recorded them digitally, using my MacBook Pro & a microphone. Take pictures, too, & then assemble the audio & photographs to distribute later—the former via *The Cenacle*, the latter by The Jellicle Guild electronic mailing list.

The first meeting of the revived Jellicle Literary Guild (105th, in all) occurred on March 29, 2008. I didn't know how it would go since I was the only carry-over from 2001. It seemed right, though, & I was ready. Seven of us in all that night, including my friends Nemo Boko, Michael Van Kleeck, & Victor Vanek, each of whom read from his or another's writings, led the conversation in discussion of mythology & dreams. It was a success, including handing 'round *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 9 | *2007 Annual*—& I rediscovered the pleasure of debuting a publication like this, like it had been ago.

The second meeting occurred on May 10, 2008 with fewer people but this time, I'd brought for all *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. First *Cenacle* debuted at a Jellicle Guild meeting in seven years. Even more rousing was my discussion of the **Manifestation Project**. In short, I wanted to push the possibility of collaboration, so started simply by handing everyone a package containing a disposable camera, a piece of chalk, a stamped return envelope, & the instruction to *manifest yourself, or your self in the world, or something like this of your choosing . . .* my idea fruited at the June 28, 2008 meeting when we saw a slideshow of the pictures everyone had taken (they also appeared in *Cenacle* | 65 | June 2008, which didn't quite make it to the meeting). Another experiment at that June meeting was inviting my dear friend Jim Burke III in Connecticut to give a transcontinental guitar concert by telephone. I was experimenting with the new technologies to discover what would work, make a better meeting, wider open doors.

By contrast, reviving the Jellicle Guild meant I could also once again read my own writing aloud to a group of people. Since 2001, I'd published my work, & read it on the radio, but rarely live, save to Kassi.

I didn't have the formed concepts of my writing in 2001 that I'd built up since. One of my literary projects is called *Double Triptych*, comprising three groups of poems (*6 x 36 Nocturnes,* 2000-2005; *New Songs [for Kassandra]*, 2005-2006; & *Many Musics*, 2006-present), & three groups of long fixtions (*Things Change?*; *Why?*; & *Labyrinthine*, with roughly parallel dates).

My *Double Triptych* raised up from previous experimentation with story sequences & poetry sequences—& poetry/fixtion mixes. Essentially, aside from form & effect, important aspects but not foundational, poetry & prose are not different. They employ the same language,

the same grammar, & are both vehicles of human communication. I've come to believe that differentiating is more an interference than an aid, that one must learn how to use these different approaches best for one's self. Language is a tool; Art wields it consciously for effect & affect both. To persuade, to confess, to describe, to story tell. One can approach Art bodied in language as a kind of serious play, playing a game perhaps, or just play, where one wishes to try this & that, to see what happens—

So the *Double Triptych*'s six components came to be from my previous efforts & the kind of ideas described above. Grow from the soil of what I had done before. From the story of Rich Americus & his rock band Noisy Children playing live at Luna T's Cafe in Hartford, Connecticut. Many of my earlier characters are more rarely seen but I always allow for their resurfacing. *Things Change?* (previously serialized in *Cenacle*s #58-63) finally appeared as a distinct downloadable piece on the *ElectroLounge*—& in truth this work is more about my struggles over several years (2000-2005) than Luna Ts Cafe & its denizens. Where I think it retains value is how deeply mixed its lines & ideas with the *6 x 36 Nocturnes* sequence of poems—& how I decided to use these to build up a greater project.

On April 2, 2008, *The ElectroLounge* celebrated its 10th anniversary online. There was a time, most of human history, before the Internet, but its subtle & gross ways of life are receding into memory. The Digital Age is the true successor to the Nuclear Age as it succeeded the Industrial Age. My point here is that I remember the years before the Internet with, I suppose, a mix of yearning & good riddance. Not everything has changed. Humans still suffer, joy, couple, part, create, destroy, pray, fear, but the distances among us has shrunk in ways not simply physical—the result of better transportation—but psychical—the result of technology that can bundle up our words & images & sounds & travel them virtually anywhere in the world. It's strange, so much so that when I write, "On April 2, 2008, *The ElectroLounge* celebrated its 10th anniversary online," I marvel & perplex both.

In the months leading up to the anniversary, the work on the site was of the usual kind: adding more of my *Many Musics* poems; updating the news/psychedelic/literary links; adding the overdue *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007; updating the radio page for each weekend I did a new episode of "Within's Within."

In March I acquired the Scriptorpress.com domain name from my friend Alfie in the UK. In April, I also moved the site's files from his server to my friend Senz's in Germany & to yage.net as well. Collaborators online, like in fleshspace, come & go; one wishes them damned well & moves on.

Also in April, as part of the site's 10th anniversary celebration, I added the newly published *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 9 | *2007 Annual*. It debuted, as noted above, at the first meeting of the revived Jellicle Literary Guild, on March 28, 2008. Featured the work of Dale Pendell, Ric Amante, Judih Haggai, G.C. Dillon, Kassi, & myself.

Lastly, a delight in Kassi's desktop publishing skills, three more of the RaiBooks series were given electronic form & posted to *The ElectroLounge*: Ric Amante's *Ferry Tales*; Joe Ciccone's *North of Jersey*; & Barbara Brannon's *Pawn Title Keep Car.* Suddenly, in this Digital Age, these books could be downloaded by anyone on the planet with a computer & an Internet connection. I wish to always marvel at this, frankly, for it is a strange miracle. Other additions

followed: audio of the Jellicle Guild meetings; improved hosting for my radio show archives; & also improved, tabbed contents for each issue of *The Cenacle* on the site (for easier file navigation).

The ElectroLounge had come a far piece in its first decade—from, essentially, a long list of links to other sites, to one that hosted a handful of content pages, to one that featured Scriptor Press publications & audio. I've come to believe that the Internet allows for an individual to take possession of a small (or not so small) piece of cyberspace—be it website, blog, membership in a forum, etc.—, & participate from that first step ever farther & wider as time & energy, skill & motivation permit. So many possibilities in starting from small; *The ElectroLounge* stands as a solid example of this.

Coming in February, *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007 was nearly two months late; there was no October 2007 issue in order to facilitate catching up. Reviving the Jellicle Guild has helped greatly toward publishing *Cenacle*s on time in the years since this issue.

That said, it is a fine issue & provides a transitional glimpse of Kassi & I moving from Seattle to Portland. We had arrived in Portland in latter 2007 with high hopes of staying a long while. We also left behind a lasting affection for Seattle. This issue captures that complex of feelings.

The cover picture of the holiday tree in Portland's downtown Pioneer Courthouse Square revisits the similar image on the cover of *Cenacle* | 47 | December 2002, during my first stretch living in Portland. I'd come back to continue living here, an older, less desperate person. Kassi used her graphic arts skills to make this cover more than a blurry snapshot, thus showing the passing of time.

Also relevant, by way of images, to the transition theme was the "Leaving Seattle/ Arriving Portland" photo series scattered through its pages. Kassi & I spend many Saturdays alone, seeing movies, journeying, grokking city places. Parks, allies, waterfronts, neighborhoods. We look for the images that seem to dance with invitation to photograph & keep. They are, in truth, everywhere; at first one looks clumsily, self-consciously; eventually the border between seeking eye & seen world opens; one whirls this way & that, fast & slow, feeling the quality of the air's heat or cool, the shifting light, moving shadows, noises, voices; the eye, the finger, the camera, the body, the world, merge, & move as though many and one both. We'd click, show each other, nod, move along.

There are bigger & smaller glints of Seattle in my writing in this issue too. Oldest of them are the concluding pages of *Things Change? [a new fixtion]*, which I'd finished January 3, 2005 (but was not completely published in *The Cenacle* until this issue). *Things Change?*, at 600 handwritten pages & 4 ½ years in the writing, is a behemoth of a work. I'd carried its manuscript across the country, east to west to east to west, through all sorts of personal dramas & bloody world events. It ends quietly, for all that, with neither questions nor their answers:

> *I sit at the corner of the bar shortly after New Year's Day 2005. What a cartoonish sounding name for a year.*
>
> > *"Why not call it Frederick? Or Blackfoot? Or Funk-a-doodle-doo?"*
> > *Americus laughs. "You finally figured out the secret"*
> > *"Eh?"*

He looks at me, smiling, open as he's ever been to me.
"Not to take it all so seriously"
"Is that it?"
The drinking men at the bar nod among themselves. Mr. Bob the barman just looks at me.
"Your choice though, Son. Always."
I nod.
Walking into the night air I am free. Done it. Told this one. Right to its last page. Took it mighty seriously. Now letting it go.
Walking into the night air & I tell who I was, OK. This is good. I've made it.
Whatever comes, my pen & I did not let down our dream, our music, it hurt, it healed, here it is, still, world here, all music, all music, all music, love & clarity.

I didn't know if I'd get to that last page, & it was relief writing those final lines. Like its poetry counterpart, *6 x 36 Nocturnes,* finished around the same time, I was ready to be done & move onto new works.

I think what I'd established in *Things Change?* and *6 x 36 Nocturnes* was a deeper confidence that I can figure out the what & how of my work over an enormous canvas of poetry or prose. There's no simple formula save to engulf one's being completely in the process of living, & to draw from the passing stuff of that living an emotionally & intellectually interpretative response. I'd done this before these works but it was their size, the length of their composition, how important they became to me measured against personal suffering & living in a world of personal suffering . . . I reached further out & further in than I ever had. These works hurt me to read, still, in a way, for I see the heart-blood on every page, some drenched in it. And I know that I am free of "masters"—for better or worse, likely both, I bend a knee no longer to any other who made or is making Art. I am both becoming, & arrived to, what I am.

The tricky thing with my *Double Triptych* is that the fixtions & the poems are not being published at the same time—the fixtions comprise many more pages & so take more issues to serialize. So while *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007 concluded the publication of *Things Change?*, *Why?* & *Labyrinthine* still awaited their turns; contrarily, *6 x 36 Nocturnes* had appeared in *Cenacle*s *#42-56* & *New Songs [for Kassandra]* had been published in *Cenacle*s *#57-61*. As a result, the *Many Musics* in this issue (First Series, #3-60) were composed in latter 2006, not 2004 into early 2005 like *Things Change?*'s finale. They reflect life lived in Seattle for years, not months.

Three examples of poems written in Seattle that reflect its time as home: "Alki Beach Dusk," written for a summer's day spent on the glaring, crowded urban beach of that name:

Live with no explain of
flaring mountains to a quiet canyon's glow,
& what left a roiling surf to remember, & forget.

"Dash Point" for a pretty camping spot outside the city a short distance:

> *Coming back, between breaths of wind,*
> *there is silence. Not wanting, no return, tis arrival.*

"Plaza (Remembrance)" for a night on my own, Kassi visiting kin in Colorado. I'd biked a long way through city, now late, now tired, trying to keep a little in words:

> *Here's what I learned:*
> *flesh remembers what hearts would forget—*
> *empathy is a deep nod to shared suffering—*
> *there is little can be squared with the world—*
> *arrogance shutters fear's slaves, some don't escape—*

My poems are rarely place-centered, but they do reflect to some degree a sense of external condition as well as internal. And these places are often urban, rarely rural landscapes. Reflecting on this more, I think: I start in external space & usually leap in. They would be different, are different, by setting, even when this is no more or less obvious than breath & beat.

My final work in this issue relevant to this transition theme occurs in "Notes From the Northwest," journal excerpts from November & December 2007—so much closer to the issue's publication date. No longer arriving in Seattle, no longer living there, now arrived & living in Portland, again, & I questioned myself of this:

> *I thought of how low, how nearly gone I was 5 years ago here, yet got up every day & kept trying, it was hard, this place is already deeply embedded for me in all that yet there was another aspect of it, I kept writing, I had good, high hours, I wrote & read & listened to music, TV & movies, I didn't stop—all this is to me the myth as I've cumed it since—it's true enough—but why return, why not somewhere new? Why not old dream San Francisco?*

The answer I give is that I've always "looked for the hidden, what eludes the easy, common glance," that Portland bears something "close to me," not yet path or ideas, but a beginning. I think that's why I am not an elaborate describer of place—I wear them like clothes, breathe them, they fit to the skin of my mind as much as body. I've moved from Connecticut to Boston to Seattle to Portland to Connecticut to Seattle to Portland, each time putting on a new skin, in a sense fitting the others better by rendering them memories, more comfortable in that role. Portland & Seattle, even Connecticut, drew me back with a sense of unfinished business or, more precisely, a desire to resume & continue on awhile. As of this writing, Boston seems to be doing the same.

We met Dale Pendell by chance at Burning Man 2007, when we were gifting out books from our No Borders Free Bookstore, & he was preparing to read at the nearby open mic stage. It was a pleasure to publish his essay "Green Flames: Thoughts on Burning Man, the Green Man, and Dionysian Anarchism." In it he contends human history to be a struggle between "Dionysian Anarchists," like those who go to Burning Man, & the apologists for the necessity of the police state. He rapturously concludes:

> *We must remember that anytime large groups of people can get together cooperatively, it puts the lie to the Hobbesian thesis that people are innately irresponsible and dangerous. That is the real reason that the government insists on police presence—even though they are clearly unnecessary. Free festivals are a threat to the whole rationalization for the existence of the armed, coercive forces of "internal security." Such a free festival would be a light to the world for centuries: proof that cooperative living, free from armed coercion, is not "unthinkable," but the way things should be. Free the imagination!*

G.C. Dillon's "Corina, Corina" is a charming story of a time-traveler who returns again & again to a home where his neighbor naturally ages over a lifetime while he doesn't. Dillon's best fiction—in the spirit of Hemingway's style of leaving much of a story "submerged" from the reader—is effective in both what the narrative includes & what it leaves just out of view.

Ric Amante contributes Part VI of his fiction "Ecuador Hotel" (the most recent part to date). This section describes the anticipation Skype has toward his pending meeting with Federico:

> *He had no doubt Federico was nearby, and the imminence of their meeting both disturbed and excited him. Disturbing because engagement might soften his edge, exciting because engagement might hone it. As it was, this was destiny, as hard-wired in Skype's skull as hunger. How and when it comes less an unsought miracle than test of faith. Prototypes had arisen, been embraced, flourished, withered, entered the bloodstream—the messages all potent, transformative, transitory. A stronger alchemy that would sift, valorize, and sing the days was in order.*

I don't know when or if this story will continue, but I very much hope so.

One of the works we'd published in the 2007 Burning Man Books series was Plato's "Myth of the Cave" allegory from *The Republic*. In it, Socrates makes the argument that the best governors of state are those with no expectations of material gain from doing so:

> *The truth is that if you want a well-governed state to be possible, you must find for your future rulers some way of life they like better than government; for only then will you have government by the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of gold, but of the true happiness of a good and rational life. If you get, in public affairs, men whose life is impoverished and destitute of personal satisfactions, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their own inadequacy from a political career, there can never be good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society.*

I think this statement's verity stands as validly now as it did 2400 years ago. For better & worse.

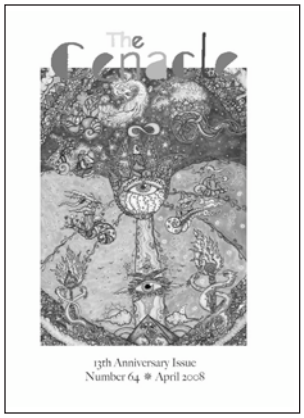
Another reprinted piece is Judith Hooper's 1983 *OMNI* magazine interview with scientist & visionary John Lilly (also reprinted as part of the Burning Man Books 2007 *Infinite Coincidence* psychedelic writings anthology). Lilly pioneered the use of LSD with sensory depravation tanks, & wrote many brilliant books (*Center of the Cyclone* is my favorite, with its elaborate discussion of mind meta-programming). Lilly's work & thinking & seeming basic

decentness places him, in my view, among the great psychedelic thinkers of the past century (including Aldous Huxley, Robert Anton Wilson, Albert Hofmann, Terence McKenna, Timothy Leary, & Alan Watts).

Judih Haggai's offering of poems includes a brilliant piece called "tribal offering" that justifies full inclusion here:

i have lived amongst you
i have never lived
i have always lived
i remember the attachment
i remember the detachment
the human story is waves of seething closeness
and ripping apart
we are drops in a huge roaring lifetime
small beats hoping to find a thunderous orchestra
searching for meaning
relaxing after a sudden joy
our culture blooms from one tribe to the next
we listen to one another
we learn from one another
underneath it all
we seek a common tongue
in many different voices

These are brave sentiments in a dark time with need of them.



The issue concludes with images from Seattle, the "Last Yawp" featuring a graffiti'd warehouse, & the back cover the sunset over Elliott Bay harbor. Moments culled from years, gestures toward summing the best of a living experience.

I suppose *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008 embodied our belief that we were going to be in Portland for a long time. I had been at my job eight months & it was going well. The first Jellicle Guild meeting since 2001 had come off well in March, & this issue debuted (as note above) at the May 10, 2008 meeting. We just don't know what next in life, good or bad. That said, I am glad this issue exists, evidences a happy time, & reminds me that such times come & go & come again.

This issue initiated a tradition that has become annual since: the anniversary color cover. Printing in color is costlier than black & white, but owning a color printer mitigates this cost enough to make it possible once annually. It's a special thing to do, & marks the arrival of a yearly *Cenacle* milestone in a fine way. Nemo Boko's artwork, with Kassi's page design, began this tradition in finest manner.

Also commenced as tradition was my "From Soulard's Notebooks" anniversary issue commentary on the year come & gone. I wrote about my delight at being in Portland, & reviving the Jellicle Guild—& also urged all to embrace the hope scattered everywhere in

2008.

The poetry in the issue was by a mix of new, regular, & returning contributors. New among the mix is the work of Portlander Michael Van Kleeck. Particularly notable among his pieces is an historical fantasia called "The Resurrection of Celilo Falls" in which he imagines the revenge of a local damned-up waterway:

sing to me of the way she was
raped for her energy,
and sing to me of the day
she broke through, the day Celilo
came back from her watery grave.

Returning to the *Cenacle* pages after a seven-year absence is the singular, idiosyncratic, & still beautiful poetry of Joe Ciccone. There is in "Summer Place" a streak of lines that shows Ciccone's power & humor both:

Then what did I do?
I picked a single note and built a song around it.
I heard a siren wail so I burned an entire city.
I closed a laughing can to hear the darkness better.
I bled into a well already full from bleeding.
I sent for someone who had also sent for me.
I carried a pen that burped and stuttered.
I watched a house leap into the ocean.
I built a telephone of wax.
I cried acid tears.
I broke down.
I spoke.

Regular contributor Judih Haggai offers up many fine poems as well. I must like funny, dark, fierce poems because, like the others above, hers are often all of these things:

What would you say
if you were offered a mountain
filled with red flowers, not poppies, but heavenly all the same
would you drop your life
your habitual this, thats and musts
to slip on your hiking shoes
warm layers and free flying mind

My second series of *Many Musics* commences in this issue. I had decided I was going to write another series of 60 poems. Recurring characters (an old, troubled man based very loosely on my then recently deceased father, to whom this issue is dedicated); themes (war, desire, regret, life's mysteries); lines ("tonight someone suffers"); dream fragments (blood canvas); poems responding to paintings & photographs viewed in museums (Ansel Adams, Claude Monet,

René Magritte, Pierre-Auguste Renoir)—these all comprise my poetical terrain, my music's materials. Nature, too, & literature, & history, & politics, but less so thus far.

Two fiction pieces appear in this issue. G.C. Dillon's "The Braided Pony" is a story of redemption gauzed & gauded in an elven fantasy. Brief, but with a lingering bite.

My own *Why? [a new fixtion]* debuts in this issue. While a sequel to *Things Change?* (as it was itself next in a very long series of related stories), it differs in that I was ready again to create new characters & locales, & revisit old ones. What interests me is that while this story still bears some of *Things Change?*'s painful self-obsession, I found my way back to storytelling. I think more & more over the years I see fixtion as needing as much & as little narrative as waking life does.

It had been a couple of years since a letter by Jim Burke III had appeared in *The Cenacle*. Writing, as he often does, of the dangers of technology, his letter's most crucial lines read:

> *I have long held that technology is exponential unto itself—that is, technology causes more and more advanced technology to be created not only by itself, but for itself and out of necessity. I also believe that it is closely tied to consumerism and that until our culture accepts a paradigm shift to economy (read this section of Thoreau's* Walden*), our planet will remain in a world of shit as evidenced by global warming and resulting climate changes.*

My "Notes from the Northwest" covers a number of topics (an art exhibition, the origins of the Jellicle Guild, Woody Allen's newest film embarrassment), but what I find most notable is "Scriptor Press Notes Toward a Business Model," in which I addressed the struggles of making & distributing Art in a culture which commodifies *everything*. Its crux reads:

> *It starts with not charging for my work or that I publish. Deciding that, & committing to it, is huge, & only a beginning. The impulse toward free, share, is an idealistic gesture, a child's, a gesture in kindness to strangers who may take & neither understand the gesture nor value what received. "Free" may equal "worthless"*

Essentially, two years later, nothing in my mind has changed. However, the new technologies have allowed easier dissemination of all kinds of media. The challenge has shifted from human gatekeepers to mastering the tools now available. The work distributed must still & always be of the best kind possible, but the good news is that this can now be more of one's focus (as long as one is not trying to make a living on it—that struggle is as ugly as ever).

Two reprinted works appeared in this issue. Joseph Campbell's "Bios & Mythos" (also reprinted part of the Burning Man Books 2007 series) grapples with the origin & function of human mythology, how it is rooted in both cognitive self-awareness & in how human societies literally & figuratively shelter & delay the maturation & independence of their young. It is a complex & persuasive essay.

Dr. Albert Hofmann's "How LSD Originated" recounts his discovery of LSD-25, from his work with ergot fungus to his infamous psychedelic bike ride in 1943. Hofmann is a fascinating person who lived to be 100 (he died around the time of the publication of this

issue), & his deeply intelligent & sensitive speeches & writings about LSD contrast starkly with the mainstream media's & government's willfully hysterical fear-mongering ignorance.

It was the morning of June 27 that our momentum for 2008 hit an unseen wall. My boss at Symantec called me at home that Friday morning & told me that most of my team's colleagues & I had been laid off as of the following Monday. That was that. Nine months of hard work—the fact of us moving from Seattle down to Portland in the first place—was done. Millions of Americans—& millions in many other countries—fell victim to powerful, inscrutable forces—unseen, unknown, &, for the most part, untouched by what they caused to happen to so many others.

The thing about millions of layoffs is that they strike individually. Each person, his or her family, dependents, suffers a layoff in a different way. Some have savings to help; some do not. Some lose houses; some have none to lose. I will never know most of those who received similar phone calls—or received letters, or were called into meetings—, & maybe there is something vitally wrong to this—what might have happened if millions of us had come outdoors & met each other? (I would contend, as said earlier, that the free-falling economy denied John McCain his expected Presidency; Hillary Clinton too.) It's not much of a reach to say that had millions of jobless souls descended on Washington, DC, the bastards who got away—many with bonuses & golden parachutes to boot—would have been surrounded for some justice.

What does one do upon a layoff? In shock, one checks his wallet, his savings, calculates his diminished income, looks at loved ones, & carries on. A deep blow, showing no physical mark, causing only psychic pain.

Carried on. Job hunted, wrote, worked on press projects. By early July, thanks to Kassi's desktop publishing skills, we'd added to *The ElectroLounge* an electronic version of my 1999 book of poetry, *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*. We also improved the nine volumes of *Scriptor Press Sampler*s online by updating them with tabbed contents for easier navigation. These small improvements took even better advantage of the new technologies. They require one to continuously experiment & to keep aware of the development of new tricks.

During the last two months I was working at Symantec, I was developing the ideas comprising Manifestation Project. It began in early May 2008 in my current fixtion *Labyrinthine*, which itself was responding to a lecture by Marlene Dobkin DeRios, which I had broadcast on SpiritPlants Radio. Her discussion of the great value of thinking about psychedelics as "mind manifesting." *Cenacle* | 65 | June 2008 bore the first fruit of my ideas about this matter. I gathered the underlying philosophy (in the form of prose, fixtion, & poems) in the issue's "Notes from the Northwest." One passage stands fairly well for the whole:

> *Manifestation Project is my idea that we are here to manifest—that all manifests but humans have a unique way of doing this, as individuals & as a race—not better than other creatures & creations—but a human way—*

1. *Doubt any person's absolute certainty or proclamation of "truth"*
2. *Heed what impacts—thoughts, emotions, impressions of a mental or physical kind*
3. *Dreams are strangely useful, if engaged more than casually*
4. *No human desire can absolutely be called deviant or perverse until any kind of a standard can be proven to have existed among all persons at all times in all places*
5. *The visible is not all; the unseen coaxes, & eludes*
6. *Nature is neither wholly other nor wholly at one with humanity. Nature is not at one with itself.*
7. *Art is available to all, a gift already present.*

Many of the issue's contributors were given at the 5/10/08 Jellicle Guild meeting a disposable camera, a piece of chalk, a stamped envelope, & the instruction to *manifest*. Kassi & I received back the cameras & selected photos for the issue. Thus the issue is visually marked by the idea. It was a satisfying first experiment.

What's funny is that my "Notes from the Northwest" **Manifestation Project** notes concluded just a few days before I was laid off. The challenge shifted from theorizing, & the making of Art, to spending that summer head up against economic realities. How does one manifest while job-hunting? In a shitty economy? I was trying to figure it out. It wasn't easy.

Cenacle 65 didn't show up at the June 2008 Jellicle Guild meeting. Technical issues combined with shock. Kassi & I kept working on it till it was done not long after. Beyond the **Manifestation Project** pictures, the issue is full of good contents.

My "From Soulard's Notebooks" contains my first letter to Barack Obama, then a Senator from Illinois running for President. The conclusion stands for the whole & sums I think many people's hopes & fears at the time about supporting Obama:

> *I will vote for you. I will work for your campaign after my own ways. I will cheer when you take office. But I will be with millions watching thereafter, & still ready for whatever comes next.*

There is a lot of good poetry in this issue. It had been a year & a half since Ric Amante's poetry had appeared in *The Cenacle*. His five new poems included musings by night & by dawn, memories of a grandfather, the struggles of an alcoholic, & a kind of physics-based love poem.

Michael Van Kleeck's new work includes a powerful long poem called "MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!" I saw him preach on a Portland city street.

> *I'll write my own Declaration of*
> *Independence when I break free*
> *from the muse's satin shackles,*
> *the short, orgasmic pleasure of*
> *FUCKING THE FAR BEYOND*
> *replaced by the post-coital dread*
> *of becoming nothing*
> *a sentenced spider who just spent*
> *his eternal sperm*

on a spontaneous widow not worth
these webbed words left behind
"MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!"
Sign up right here and
practice your performance—
The judges are decapitated.
The priests have all gone to sleep.

Judih Haggai's trio of new poems includes the following lines wrought of deep seeing & feeling:

it's so sweet, life's beautiful, fighting over the tip
life's good, endless paychecks doing endless jobs
life's waiting like a ripe olive on an ancient tree
always bearing fruit, a bowlful of promises

Joe Ciccone also offers up a trio of poems; "Boredom Vaccine" includes the following prosy line:

Eat a penny keep a penny find brains in the sides of airplanes wet with rain great names like sounds of pain down hallways that hide their mirrors amidst solid works that were once only numbers set to music played through strings whose notes we cannot fathom while birds turn to telephone wires which turn into rivers then bridges and at last cities that go on for years beneath their oceans of sky whose wheels are burning in their engines.

& its rejoinder:

We push god further into the corner.

Finally, my *Many Musics, Second Series*' second half of poems. Two themes recur through the poems: *the way is Dis-illusion,* & *empty the temples of men*. Dis-illusion is an idea I've long worked with, essentially a challenge to myself, & others, to work to see *not* what one *wishes*, but *what is*. This is hard, & I do not know what the result looks like.

The way is called dis-illusion, waking hour's
new brutal reports, no bridge of glass high
enough for silence. All passes, & passes again.
Everything shits, everything's soil. What comfort
in breathing, a meal of warm bread, safe
nest, laughing voice, music & starlight.

The second is my belief that the native human wish to deeper know self, other, the world, & the relations among these is more often than not crushed by crowding into human institutions of religion. Whether church, synagogue, mosque, or other kind of so-called sacred building,

the instructions given on how to pray, how to think, what to believe, what is not mentioned or emphasized, outgains the value of communion among seeking souls. How can this be asserted? Simple. Look about the cities & towns of the world. Behold the homeless everywhere, the sick without healthcare, the poor without hope. The way every body & every hour & every inch of valued land is commodified, pressed into competition one against the other. I say flee the temples & look at the world without mediation. One needs not a robed preacher or a so-called sacred tome to see & feel the miracle of life in all of its many manifestations. One needs not humble one's own joys & sufferings before those of a mythic hero. Religious institutions, like government, like any concentrated centers of human power, seek, in the end, not to liberate their members, citizens, or followers, but to consolidate, expand, & perpetuate their own existence & control.

G.C. Dillon's fiction "Serendipity is a Happy Accident?" is a fantastical re-telling of the John Smith/Pocahontas story involving time travel & spatial dis-location. In it, his education as a history student combines sleekly with his deep capacities to compose speculative fiction.

The next installment of my *Why?* fixtion pursues further a strange melding of old characters & new. I still wrote about the rock band Noisy Children, about the rock joint Luna T's Cafe, about the poor, the crazy, the obsessed, but found that new characters & settings helped me to freshly pursue mixing in my continuing themes: human waste amidst the nearly inexhaustible evidence of the world's beauty.

Another welcome return to *The Cenacle's* pages was Ralph Emerson, & his series of linguistics essays on phonesthemes. "B is for Body" is both playful & well-researched, rolls out a delightfully readable study of the letter B, beginning:

> *Let's play a shapes game. Let's pretend for a moment that B isn't a letter but a picture. What does it show? Look: B. Turn the page clockwise for a second so the curves of the B come down toward you. What do you see? I see breasts. Wishful thinking, you say? Well, maybe, but why shouldn't we have a picture of breasts in our alphabet? They're important.*

This issue features two reprints. The first of these, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings" is both a masterful piece of magical fiction, & a cutting, though still affectionate, social commentary. This work was also reprinted in an anthology of Garcia Marquez's short fiction in the Burning Man Books 2008 series.

Also reprinted is D.M. Turner's "CydelikSpace," whose theme, building upon personal experience, as well as the thinking of writers like Aldous Huxley & Stanislov Grof, sums:

> *There exists a state which I will call "CydelikSpace," that I have visited numerous times through the use of psychedelics . . . . It is accessible now, and even appears to be the underlying reality behind all existence. It is of this state that one becomes aware, to a greater or lesser degree, during deep psychedelic experiences, and any other mystical or spiritual experience.*

My critique of any work on psychedelia is usually the same: if it can be agreed that psychedelics manifest mind, serve as amplifiers, then no one individual's experience can draw a successfully complete set of generalities. What writers such as Turner—& Grof & Huxley, & a number

of others—do successfully, is display the manifestations of fine, deep minds—hinting at what others might experience too—& thus serve to specify psychedelia's possibilities, & to counter the witch hunting paranoia of those who prefer the masses still remain, by & large, bloated, drunken, & most definitely *not* manifested.

After completing & distributing *Cenacle 65* online & in print, we spent the summer preparing the Burning Man 2008 series of chapbooks—& Kassi worked while I job-hunted.

Job-hunting, in short, sucks. It is a soul-crumbling time, reducing the seeker to a polite form of begging, & waiting, & more begging. Free time is darkly shadowed by want & lack. One tends to become less & less social as there isn't much to chat about casually, & the increasing sense of frustration resembles a sickness that won't end, save by the nod of a stranger. I had to do this throughout the summer until early September. I was not alone in this; yet this awareness was not comforting.

This was the tenth year I'd assembled the No Borders Free Bookstore, fifth year with Kassi. The books this year included Rachel Carson's environmental essay *Mother Sea: The Gray Beginnings*; Gabriel Garcia Marquez's short fiction anthology, *Fugitive Survivors of a Celestial Conspiracy*; W.S. Merwin's selection of poetry, *Walking at Night, Between the Two Deserts, Singing*; Fyodor Dostoevsky's short fiction *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*; *Out Here We is Stoned… Immaculate: A Tenth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*; & Hakim Bey's underground socio-political classic, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*.

The festival itself was fun as always, though again I was attending it unemployed. But ten years of living out the year & then making it to Black Rock City was a reward in itself. Biking the desert deep into the night. Handing out hundreds of chapbooks that would travel around the world. Kassi & I worked hard to get there & make the week a good one. Riding from western Oregon to northern Nevada, we had many a good adventure away from Portland. A forested area of central and southern Oregon called the Oregon Outback Scenic Byway marks for me a waking life counterpart to my fixtion's "White Woods."

We also brought No Borders Free Bookstore to the Portland Zine Symposium, third

year in a row, first time while living there. It's a great event, but in truth Scriptor Press does not fit in there. I'm not sure why. Different kinds of weird, maybe.

September came, I found work as an industry analyst for a small company in downtown Portland, & watched with everyone else as the American economy continued its collapse. The end of George W. Bush's nightmarish reign as American president coincided with all this. The election season was in full swing; things were changing, like it or not.

In late October, *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008 debuted at the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. This was the first issue after the summer's long job struggles. It is again a mix of new & regular contributors.

This mix grows a journal's (or any group project's) identity over time. I try to work with approximately ten contributors per issue, & my wish is that there be one to two new contributors among these. New contributors come in a variety of ways: online, friends of friends, chance meetings. I delight in the never-knowing. That *The Cenacle* is quarterly allows for these meetings to likely affect each issue.

We met Mari Floraday at Burning Man 2008, & it was she who brought the California poet Daniel Schroyer to our attention. His "Listening to Bombs" is such a great-wrought piece of work I quote it here in its completeness, by way of gratefulness—

i'm not faithless
and
neither are they

heroes?
terrorists?
who knows?

peace begins with forgiveness
not finding
but creating

like mornings each
its own package
unwrapping
just born light
listen
the birds know

i name this epiphany
unfolding
not so slowly
now that time
knows me
so intimately

i wish to share
this opening
this understanding

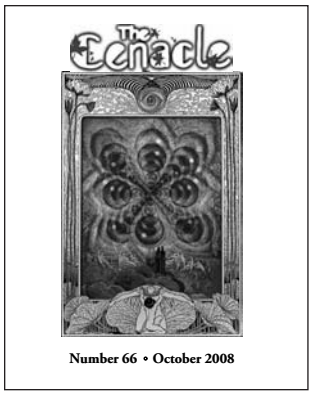
here are my hands
my heart

i am
for mending

Among Ric Amante's new poems is "Boomerang," a poem which is both funny & quietly furious. Smacking out at the lures of eternal bodiless Nirvana, he calls such an idea "dreary, unimaginative! . . . illogical." Citing the intentional kindnesses of various strangers (whether historical or rhetorical in nature, unimportant), he concludes:

We'll all be returning, they say,
some more helpful than others,
refining our service and love
with a word or a gift or a life—
then another.

I believe Amante is as good as any contemporary poet out there, famous or obscure, &, frankly, better than most. His art is both masterful & humble. Musically, plainly, brilliant.



Judih Haggai's excellent poems wake up early, look forward to Tuesday's t'ai chi, ride bikes in war torn deserts, miss loved ones, converse with mosquitoes & visions of Mark Rothko. There is love of family, of solitude, of music, of compassion. Bending is not simply not breaking—it is an alternate path, an unstuck way of seeing & feeling & interpreting the world within & without.

I wrote the first half dozen of my *Many Musics, Third Series* before I got laid off in late June. I had **Manifestation Project** ideas primarily on my mind (some of these poems first appeared in *Cenacle* 65 in the "Notes from the Northwest" piece). Afterward, the remaining 24 poems, I believe are caught in the poem "Plumage":

Tonight I still beat at narrow faith,
at vows thin of mystery & pleasure.
I am reaching for the hungrier words,
to sing, to burn, to reveal. New sounds
of the sea in my blood, next page,
the way on. Tonight I will not drown.

G.C. Dillon's short fiction "Ten Thousand Spoons When All You Need is a Knife" is a dark tale, set in a fast food restaurant. It's funny, fairly merciless, & over far too soon & just precisely right.

My fixtion *Why?* pursues deeper into its new places. One is a TV show called *Trip Town*—a show I'd briefly describe as a kind of literary extension of David Lynch's *Twin Peaks*, without the restraints of network, budget, actors. Another is the romance between Dylan & Maya, two young people who meet on a bus, & travel with a more desperate man named John into a surreal version of Portland, Oregon, a reconstructed version of the city & experiences I'd had in it back in 2002. I determined to give those days to Art as fruitful material. Also there is Global Wall, a sort of wealthy preacher with a somewhat ambiguous plan to wield power for affect & vengeance. As *Why?* unfolded I came to believe I could feed more & more of me into it, find new ways to do this.

Ralph Emerson's essay "M & N: Mouth and Nose," elaborates on both the distinct & shared duties these letters bear. It concludes with the following anecdote:

> *Here's an anecdote from* The New York Times*' "Metropolitan Diary" (Dec. 9, 2002). A mother wrote in that her five-year-old daughter was asked to bring to school in a paper bag "something starting with the letter 'N'." Although the bag was still unfilled by morning, the little girl ate her breakfast unperturbed, firmly refusing her family's frantic last-minute suggestions of nickels and napkins. "I know what I am going to put in," she said. "Nothing." And off she went, bag empty, a budding linguist.*

My "Notes from the Northwest" discusses my summer of job-hunting, & concluded thusly:

> *Now it seems more like the idea is to make a person nervous, easier to intimidate, the goal being to produce a more timid, compliant workforce. Crush the power of unions. Push people into leaning on their credit cards. Create a workforce of grateful wage slaves. A rare few will make an awful lot of money; most will struggle, live with struggle & worry so commonly that they will not suspect that something has gone wrong, that they need not live like this, that someone is manipulating the situation. Big business is lying, those in government are lying. Not every last soul but enough to systematize the lies. Create a "normality" of stress & uncertainty.*
>
> *There are those who like it like this, who will strive to keep things uncertain, who will profit madly from instability. Most people will never see them, up there, would-be mangods orchestrating the unending series of crises, laughing lords of the lie. I'm just asking myself who is benefitting from all this chaos—financial panic—who stands to gain & who to lose—suddenly in a week the economy is crashing? It makes no sense—or maybe it does—*

Two reprints in this issue. Rachel Carson's "Mother Sea: The Gray Beginnings" is from Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us.* We also published this as a volume in the Burning Man Books 2008 series. It bears the following deeply memorable passage:

> *When they went ashore the animals that took up a land life carried with them a part of the sea in their bodies, a heritage which they passed on to their children and which even today links each land animal with its origin in the ancient sea. Fish, amphibian, and reptile, warm-blooded bird and mammal—each of us*

> *carries in our veins a salty stream in which the elements sodium, potassium, and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as in sea water. This is our inheritance from the day, untold millions of years ago, when a remote ancestor, having progressed from the one-celled to the many-celled stage, first developed a circulatory system in which the fluid was merely the water of the sea. In the same way, our lime-hardened skeletons are a heritage from the calcium-rich ocean of Cambrian time. Even the protoplasm that streams within each cell of our bodies has the chemical structure impressed upon all living matter when the first simple creatures were brought forth in the ancient sea. And as life itself began in the sea, so each of us begins his individual life in a miniature ocean within his mother's womb, and in the stages of his embryonic development repeats the steps by which his race evolved, from gill-breathing inhabitants of a water world to creatures able to live on land.*

The idea of the sea in our blood has remained with me a very powerful one.

Peter Bergebal's "Will Harvard Drop Acid Again?" discusses the new push for psychedelic research getting underway—on intractable problems such as cluster headaches—& being conducted by Dr. John Halpern & Rick Doblin.

Now there's the laudable part of this: brilliant men using powerful tools to alleviate debilitating human pain. And then there's the ironic aspect: that drugs & alcohol are both legal & neither displays the power to cause anything curative or miraculous. Yet for LSD or marijuana or the like to be sanctioned even slightly, they must be proven to be healing & restorative *wonders*.

A brief comment on the non-textual aspect of this issue: it bears wonderful artwork, including the cover, by Portland artist Gwyllm Llwdd, & some great photography by Victor Vanek. And the back cover is devoted to an unpaid advertisement endorsing the Barack Obama/Joe Biden ticket for President. It was a damned heady time that fall.

November came &, miracle of miracles, the United States elected Barack Obama to succeed George W. Bush. What a fabulous night Election Night was! I think it marked the first time in at least a decade that the world celebrated together. Oh to think something good *might* happen again.

The next morning I biked downtown to work, greeted my colleagues, began my day's activities, & by mid-morning had been laid off again. This time face-to-face with the decision-maker, & him sad & scared & no bullshit. But, laid off again. Here we were. Back to the job-hunt. The November meeting of the Jellicle Literary Guild went on, was great fun. Kassi & I celebrated Thanksgiving. We even meant it.

As promised, more on SpiritPlants Radio. Essentially, by necessity, I took over the re-creation of the station. From the foundation of my weekly three-hour (three times a month) show, I built up a whole network of programming. It was an opportunity to create something new. What would fill its hours, given no budget, no advertising, little audience, & the vast riches of the Internet? So I answered this for myself. Psychedelic rock: Pink Floyd. Comedy: Bill Hicks. Electronica: Shpongle. Lectures: Terence McKenna. Jazz: John Coltrane. News: *Democracy Now!* Old time radio: *Lights Out!* Literature on the radio: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Even a second DJ joined me: DJ Lain & his show "Japan is Dumb: The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lain." Eventually built up a website. A weekend schedule. Show archives.

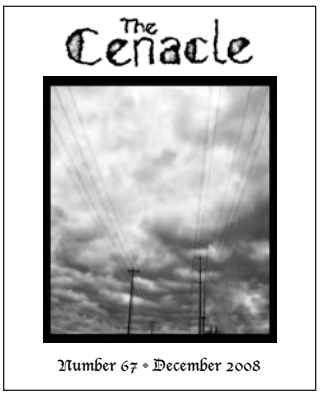
Listener statistics. A reputation for quality & adventure. As obscure as Scriptor Press's, yet as validly existing in the world. I kept doing my show, now deeply contextualized, & began over time to broach the idea of: what is, or could be, *psychedelic radio*?

SPIRITPLANTS RADIO
November 22-23, 2008 Schedule
Listen Live: http://yage.net:9000; *Web Page:* http://spfradio.yage.net
Radio Community: http://www.spiritplants.org/spf-radio-f7 | *Radio Blog:* http://spiritplantsradioblog.blogspot.com
Schedule below is for Pacific US time zone. For other time zones, use: http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/converter.html

Saturday 11.22.08	Program		Sunday 11.23.08	Program
12 AM – 3 AM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic):** *11.22.2004 show*		12 AM – 1 AM	**Jazz Café:** *John Coltrane live in Stockholm 1963*
3 AM – 4 AM	**Comedy Hour:** *Bill Hicks – Love, Laughter, & the Truth*		1AM – 2 AM	**Long Live Rock!:** *Pink Floyd, Live in Stuttgart, 1970*
4 AM – 6 AM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*		2 AM – 4 AM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*
6 AM – 7 AM	**Olde Tyme Radio:** *Lights Out: 1) Until Death; 2) Cat Wife*		4 AM – 7 AM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic):** *11.26.2005 show*
7 AM – 8 AM	**Long Live Rock!:** *Pink Floyd, Live in Stuttgart, 1970*		7 AM – 8 AM	**Electronica by DJ Veronica:** *Shpongle, Some Tales of the Inexpressible*
8 AM – 9 AM	**News Hour:** *Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman*		8 AM – 9 AM	**Comedy Hour:** *Bill Hicks – Love, Laughter, & the Truth*
9 AM – 11 AM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*		9 AM – 10 AM	**Storybook Time:** *Jack Kerouac, On the Road*
11 AM – 2 PM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (new!):** *11.22.2008 show*		10 AM – 12 PM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*
2 PM – 4 PM	**Japan is Dumb: The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lain**		12 PM – 1 PM	**News Hour:** *Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman*
4 PM – 5 PM	**Storybook Time:** *Jack Kerouac, On the Road*		1 PM – 4 PM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic):** *11.22.2004 show*
5 PM – 6 PM	**Jazz Café:** *John Coltrane live in Stockholm 1963*		4 PM – 5 PM	**Olde Tyme Radio:** *Lights Out: 1) Until Death; 2) Cat Wife*
6 PM – 8 PM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*		5 PM – 7 PM	**Psychedelic Lectures:** *Terence McKenna – True Hallucinations*
8 PM – 9 PM	**Electronica by DJ Veronica:** *Shpongle, Some Tales of the Inexpressible*		7 PM – 9 PM	**Japan is Dumb: The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lain**
9 PM – 12 AM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic):** *11.26.2005 show*		9 PM – 12 AM	**Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (new!):** *11.22.2008 show*

In December I managed to score contract work as a technical writer. Contract work means your skills are being rented for a time. It can pay well &, in hard economic times, it can prove the only kind of work easily found. I was employed: a check is a check. The weekday daylight part of me, the range of my writing & editing skills that are rentable: I rent. I do this willingly because in the end there is no choice. Pay the rent. Protect Art. Serve the Muse. There isn't anything else.

On an extraordinarily snowy night in Portland, in mid-December, Kassi & I welcomed our friend Cymon to the 20th anniversary Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Hadn't been an anniversary meeting in nine years, since 2001, & that I thought had been the last. How life twists upon itself funny, again & again. Debuting during that blizzard was *Cenacle* | 67 | December 2008, the fourth issue of that tumultuous year.



Its front cover depicts a heavily clouded sky. Its back cover a coffee house bathroom paper towel dispenser on which someone has written "We'll all be fine" & someone else has responded "Hope so." On the table of contents I apologize for the issue's lacking my "Notes from the Northwest" & a new chapter of this history. Happily, for all this, the issue's contents are good ones.

My "From Soulard's Notebooks" is a letter to then President-elect Barack Obama, my second letter to him in 2008. The heart of this letter is the following:

> *I believe, Mister President-elect, Barack, that you will do well, that you are suited for this great, hard task. You will push this nation & the world as a whole toward smarter, kinder, & eventually more prosperous days. You will lead & inspire. Others will listen, will find a model to emulate in one way or many. As always, what good that happens will not annihilate suffering or selfishness or plain stupidity. Neither fullest moon's beauty nor bloodthirstiest war lasts perpetually. Or perhaps, more accurately, life shifts between them, strangely allows & accommodates both. There will always be beauty. There will always be war.*

I concluded with the following:

> *You know what you have to do, your many tasks, the many expectations, countless possibilities & pitfalls. Mysteries beyond view, unknowable turns of fortune. Tonight, some seven weeks from when you take your oath of office, I am thinking of you with love, with respect, with a deep sense of fraternity with you, & with every possible good wish that you will succeed more often than fail, move the world into clearer air, deeper awareness of our better impulses & of each other. Tonight, I am with you in heart & spirit, I am hopeful, nothing is impossible. We can do this. Yes, we can.*

What's funny is that I still believe in what I wrote here. Nothing, nobody, is beyond the possibility of redemption. Stupidity can turn to kindness, ignorance to empathy, any imagination can ignite a soul with the unknown's lure, & chance. The tragedy is how often this never happens. A brain's best rarely spent. A race's not spent often enough to change its course.

The issue continues in this spirit with "Hartley's Righteous Rants" by David Hartley. Hartley is one of my dearest brothers, one with whom I have journeyed to many deep places. I consider his intelligence & sensitivity a dearest living thing. He writes, in this first contribution to *The Cenacle*, in part:

> *We are humans. We are technologically sophisticated but spiritually infantile. We have the power to correct many horrors that we have perpetrated upon this earth. We have the knowledge and the incentive to create a better and healthier world for ourselves and all of our fellow life forms. Oddly enough, we don't. Why? I believe we are simply not psychologically mature enough to make the necessary changes. We as a planetary people are narcissistic. Like a child who has not learned about empathy, compassion, sacrifice, and dedication, we move through our lives pursuing our individual self-interests. We exploit each other and nature to fulfill our endless desires. We in the modern West like to keep our dark side hidden from ourselves. It is easier to rationalize our sins when we don't have to see, touch, smell, and hear the results of it every day.*

A further echo in Jim Burke III's letter & its ringing opening:

> *When the social and natural sciences collide, an attempt is invariably made to qualify quantitative data, and vice versa. The social individual is absorbed into the mass, or the collective consciousness. This makes up for all the major components for our culture (unfortunately as can be seen by studying the legal and ethical systems, not all these components are justifiable in their present state of use; i.e. existence of the death "penalty"). However, we must fight the change of reality that is cast on us like a shadow. Each of us needs to step into the sun, as an individual, and express ourselves freely and in right conduct. It is the obligation of every person, possessing of intellect and perception, to channel his or her reality back to the mass and to keep them in check, perhaps even help the mass. I know now that not a day will elapse ever again when I am not practicing an art form. It is our responsibility to do this and let the mass know.*

I believe that those who reach the levels of sophisticated philosophical poetry of Burke & Hartley have paid a painful dues along the way. To look out hopeful to the world, again & again, to leap out & try to feel of the world beyond one's self, is rare, is, I believe, caused by traumas & by ecstasies alike. A human brain *not* wasted is one that, in adulthood, has come to a vulnerable openness natively known by children. The difference, I think, is that when the question "why?" comes up, the Hartley, the Burke, does not believe any one person can say, yet knows an answer is not impossible.

On a lighter note, if no less intellectually heady, is Ralph Emerson's essay "C & G: Gobbling Gutturals." What I personally cherish in his essays is, after several pages of mind-bending observations, connections, & citations, he often concludes with a soft splashdown:

> *When a character in [William Faulkner's novel* Light in August*] encounters a proud-looking stranger called Joe Christmas, he suddenly realizes "how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time . . . . it was as though there was something in the sound of [Christmas's name] that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle." Christmas is a killer, of course, and he's finally shot to death by one Percy Grimm.*
>
> *Did you hear the rattle that time?*

The poetry is no less heavy, of course. Judih Haggai's "Notes on How to Go On" includes this especially beautiful passage:

when tragedy strikes
mind whirls, constant humming
waves askew, sound too much treble
overtones jar
i'm reeling for a friend
real friend, real sad
she's grieving
and i say how to go on
i know snow falls
and i'm wishing i could feel it
snow falls, life goes on
simple cycles go on
pushing for an om moment
to go on

The second half of my *Many Musics, Third Series* contains a half-dozen poems called "Imaginal Space" (i-vi). The first begins

What rises with the light, crosses the moon,
what sings shores empty of men tonight,
a wish, a riddle, a sooth. A moving spaced,

a moveable space. Call it imaginal space.
One music, many musics, the porous ground
to any staying cry of human truth.

I'd been working with such sentiments for a long time, for their endless fruits. I suppose it comes down to working with mysteries or in the employ of answers. Breathe in the world, breathe out response. Next breath, new response. Answers solid in one moment, or a stretch, will eventually give way, unless propped. Propped, or allowed flow. Flow, change. These need trust to keep happening over time. It's hard. But the world is as imaginal as it is real. Moves, changes, flows. Poetry is the world's news, in melody:

I ask the Universe: why suffering?
Why music? & behold this world my answer.

G.C. Dillon's "The Wicked Witch" is another retelling, this one of a passage from L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. Funny, harsh, as his stories often are, one about forgiveness & compassion, beneath its clever baubles. A brief thing of beauty.

My *Why?* fixtion continues on, much of it continuing to take place in a fictionalized version of the rooming house I lived at in Portland during the fall & winter of 2002-2003. This fixtion was written only a couple of years later so the actual experience was still very live in my mind. Too, much of the story took place at Luna T's Cafe, based originally on a fast food joint in Hartford I knew as a high schooler in 1981. I've simply taken it all along with me over time, mixing places & people into an earthy, emotional, mindscape that interests me because it has a *history*, & it *flows* too.

The first of two reprints in this issue are poems by W.S. Merwin (part also of a collection we did for the Burning Man Books 2008 series). I remember one—"The Odds"—I originally found in a recent periodical in the Portland Public Library. Found & read it with all due delight:

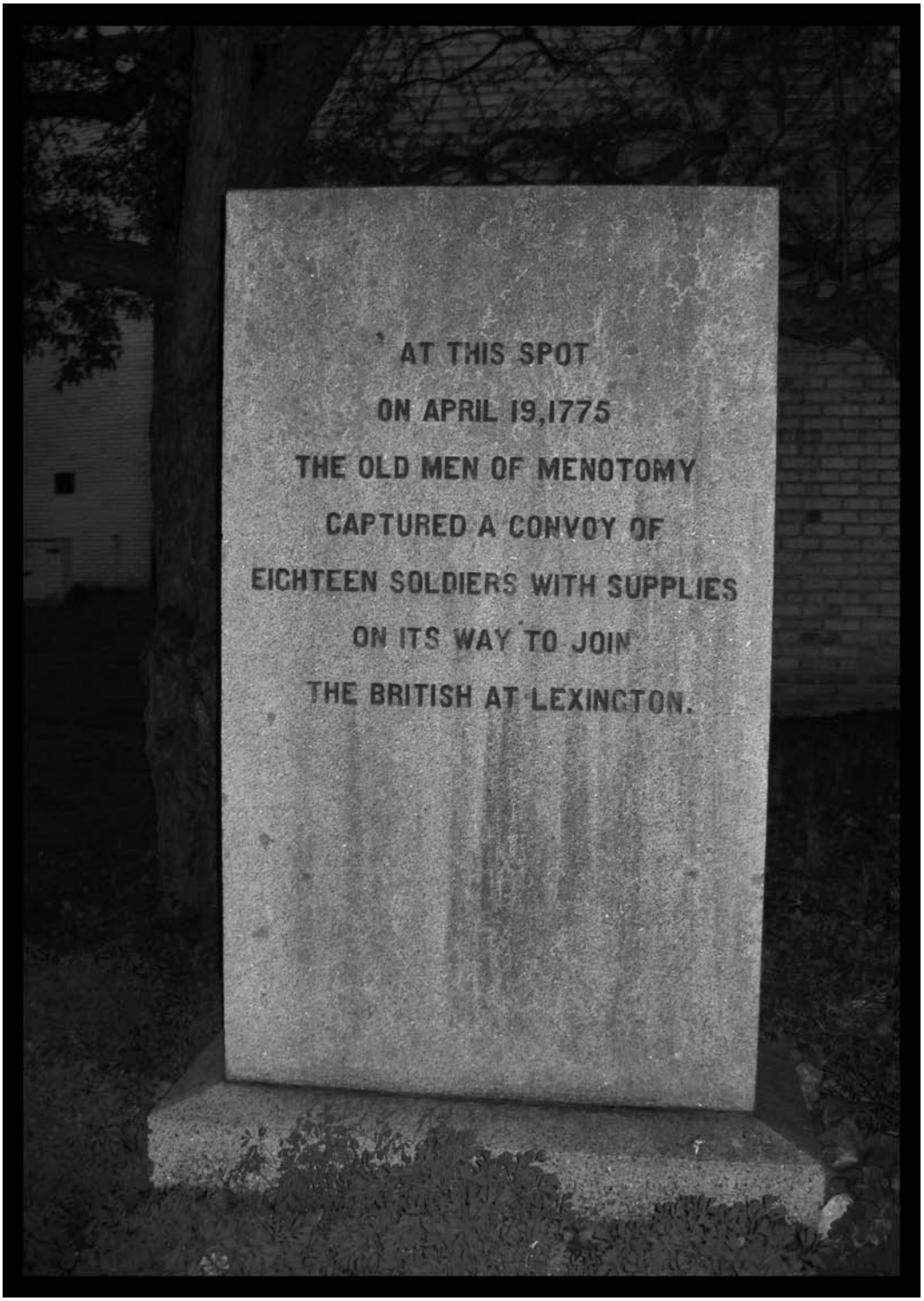
His first winter in that city
after years in the north a friend
wrote to me of how people there
were dealing with the cold
he told me that crews
were digging up the avenue
down at the corner all day
the men keeping a fire going
in an old oil drum with holes
down the sides and feeding it whatever
turned up and he had been watching
two men by the barrel with three
gloves between them passing one
glove back and forth
while they stamped their feet
and he had tried to tell whether
it was a right or a left glove

Finally, James Fadiman's "Opening the Doors of Perception," about his time as a researcher into psychedelics in the early '60s, before their prohibition. In a couple of paragraphs in his "A Moment of Reflection," I find painful verities, like those in this issue of Hartley, Burke, & Haggai in particular:

> *Why did our drug research frighten the establishment so profoundly? Why does it still frighten them? Perhaps, because we were able to step off (or were tossed off) the treadmill of daily stuff and saw the whole system of life-death-life. We said that we had discovered that love is the fundamental energy of the universe and we wouldn't shut up about it . . . .*
>
> *What we found out was that the love is there, the forgiveness is there, and the understanding and compassion are there. But like water to a fish or air to a bird, it is there all around and without any effort on our part. No need for the Father, the Son, the Buddha, the Saints, the Torah, the books, the bells, the candles, the priests, the rituals, or even the wisdom. Just there—so pervasive and so unending that it is impossible to see as long as you are in the smaller world of people separated from one another. No wonder Enlightenment is always a crime.*

Kassi & I spent the December holidays with her family in a frigid Colorado. Among goodly, warm folks. What a year. Lost two good jobs, found a third acceptable. Helped elect an excitingly new president. Made & published & disseminated art by journal, book, cyberspace, & radio. Took, in the end, nearly as many months to write about it as to live it. Some years are like that. One lives them, & then their long-lingering echoes. Moves along, leaves something behind. Not a bad deal, in a way.

* * * * * *


AT THIS SPOT
ON APRIL 19,1775
THE OLD MEN OF MENOTOMY
CAPTURED A CONVOY OF
EIGHTEEN SOLDIERS WITH SUPPLIES
ON ITS WAY TO JOIN
THE BRITISH AT LEXINGTON.

Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor

My Father Says the Word "Whores" while Recovering from Brain Surgery Or Accidental Prayer

Welcome Mr. Brainstem—
Whose spongy-tissue neurons spark
And pop, spinning a synaptic roulette,
An illegitimate version of Tourette's

In my father,
Whose brain is on ice, on fire,
Where the bruise has been blood-let to
Relieve pressure.
Welcome the first
vagaries and savageries, whose passions
used to only lurk beneath cortical
meanderings, poetry and polemics,
lust for history,
unbearable puns.

The primal pump whines and sings out
An atonal melody, singes a path past a
Benign inoperable bread-shaped tumor;
Signals wordlessly
A brand of memory
Without thought
And thought without reason
And pain without purpose.

We congregate, we coo like
Apostolic idiots, worshipping
utterances compelled from this sleeping
prophet by his lizard mind
Before cognition slips
A fast hand in.
We stand,
We hail each fist of expletives as
prim revelation;
We hear
A gentle bleating, gulps
of sound aborted;
We breathe hospital air
of pungent cleanser, blood
and bone, flowers.

Reaching mid-brain the impulse widens,
Coursing toward an intricate cerebral landscape
Now pocked with plaques, Lewy Bodies,
and make-shift bypasses, bridges
of intellect and studied practice.

We listen for salvation, for proof,
For miracle of mayhem, order
In chaos of random neural firing, wild,
Wild against hardness of skull,
Hardening of ideas, old ones, barely
Recalled, new ones, mixed, and
Mixing, in a dream bartered
For our father's fabled reality—

He dreams a brainstorm song—
A hurricane in the window;
We watch, breath held in wonder,
Waiting,
Hands tilted
In accidental prayer.

* * *

Cat Walk

(Cats have been known to walk around their homes with head in a bag, purportedly to heighten senses other than vision)

Try it. Close your eyes and walk. Feel along the walls;
You falter, seeking the familiar. The rooms you know.
You rub up against, find the touchstones. The chair
Near the wall; the bookshelf, its glass panels
Loosely proclaiming its antiquity.
It belonged to your mother's favorite aunt, the one
Who taught her to sing.

Moving out from the wall, drawn away
From the edges, you enter arrangement—
Flow and blocks to energy—*feng shui*.
The chair angles out too far; the table
Pinches—too big for the room. The living room
Wide open, the sparest space. L-shaped entry
Toward the outside door—abutted by the jut
Of the old desk you had in high school.

If you don't open your eyes, stand still—
You start to be able to see. What has been
Hurt, what heals. You smell the plants, the
Cat, the dog. Fruit ripening in the kitchen.
Sour stains on the carpet. Sweet flavor of
Enzyme cleaner. Faint straw scent of cotton
From the new couch. Dust cooking on chiffon
Valence, the drape twisted and makeshift
Across its acrid metal dowel. The slim vinyl
Neutrality of the blinds, offset by songs of wood,
Teak, oak, pine, woven in the air. This is it, alive.

Next, you move again—travel with hand along
A bannister—the presences. Live energy
Of former occupants, and of their exorcism;
Remembrances; the dragonfly glass that
Guards the space—leaded, you bought it
On the Cape, a gift to family life beneath this
Roof. When you took it down once, disaster
Entered like a hurricane; now you leave it up.
The framed print of a portrait from a Dutch painter,
From the house you grew up in; you adopted this man,
Cleric or merchant of his time, as familiar spirit;
Witness, his eyes have always followed you.

The love that mends. And something else—the rag
Hearth rug, destiny. The imprint of where the sun has
Filtered through the shades again and again. Places
The dog has worn, almost visible, on couch and carpet.
The picture of the sleeping dog with blue eye.
The box frame with poster of your son's play—
A young woman, arms folded, looking away from
The man she loves. Hope; footprints piling up
Along the floors in jaunty half-crescents.
The you's and me's. The house fills up
With solid and moving fixtures, all connected
By a netting, and the netting holds. Household.

One thing touches another; a vine-like fiber
Goes through from each to each. If, say, one day
Your cat dies, that day twists the fabric, tightens it
At one end, loosens the other, and something necessary falls through.
She was old, she was ill with cancer; still, to the end
She had asked to go out, had requested escort
When she approached her food—Although by this time
She had stopped eating even canned tuna. She had hovered
Over water as though it were a question. Her purr
Added a new harmonic, a shrill and granular complaint.
Yet she was contained, demure, as she diminished,
Crouched on the couch—tidy in her final moves.

The fabric is wrenched on this day. Everything you know
Changes. You walk into things, trip on the piles
Of footprints. It turns out, in her unassuming yet
Imperious ways, she was the guardian of things upright,
And as she faltered, the ground knocked you over from
Time to time. Now who will hold this part?

During burial it rains, the ground is hard,
and we shift from foot to foot. Nothing will fix this.
Words or why, beside the point. We plant pussy willows
On her grave, because they will grow and tangle. We
Hold hands, hold each other in some place behind
Heart and mind. Here is the place for her return, the
Promise of revival, where all dead friends may
Come to live again. Nothing is forever, except this tangle.

* * *

Paean

Everyone has been loved. Everything
has been loved. The clothes don't make the man,
But the man makes the clothes—sometimes
Of whole cloth, other times in the wearing
Of them, wearing them until they
Thin, 'til they become a rag, a remnant, a
Bandana that was once a shirt-tail.

The loving of it makes it thin, makes it
Wear, change—it loves into memory,
Fragment, forgetting in the shuffle into
Wholeness, capturing its moment in a scene,
Part of a picture that lives forever, where
All parts are like colors in a color wheel
Spun to white, then out again into any and
All colors of the world. More
than they were at first.

Everyone has been loved. There is a door
In the soul that opens like the tomb of Jesus
On the third day, that rocks open, and leaves
An empty space, where the wonder is
That something has entered the world
Again, after hurt, betrayal, retreat.

Everyone has been loved. The Lion, they say,
Has lain down with the Lamb, and the lamb
Has suckled a pup. Once you have been loved
You can never let go—You can hide but
You can't run. If you stand still,
It will grab you.

A breeze loves the laundered clothes
On the line. Not stopping, it moves through them,
Becomes them, shapes against them, fills them
Until they are sailing. A hand loves the hand
It catches, pulls it, feels the grain of fingerprints;
Feet love the ground along the pond, that
Moistens against them, curves underfoot.

Mothers love the toys of their children,
The laughter that tears them, the violence
That rounds them. Baskets love what they hold.
Bureaus love the bundles of socks and
Stray mementos—the postcard
Before the love affair; the rock from the beach,
Full of promise of something that may
Or may not ever come. Hope loves uncertainty,
Lives on it, breathes into it. Everything

Turns on the love that has claimed it, that streams
Through it, recalls it. Love means to stay. It stays. It does.

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Notes from New England

"Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes."

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England*, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as* Notes from the Northwest, *& hereon to appear under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.*

It's been eight years since this feature in *The Cenacle* was called *Notes from New England*. When I moved West in 2004 to Seattle, later to Portland, it was not with temporary intention. Over the years I missed Boston & New England, but not enough to return. Until recently, I called it sentiment, & left it at that.

The shift came last winter. For the first time, I did not anticipate the work involved in planning for the Burning Man Arts Festival. I'd been going yearly since 1999—& with KD since 2004. Our No Borders Free Bookstore was a familiar sight there. It took months to bring it off. I had no interest.

And living in Portland had run its course, somewhat disappointingly. A bad economy; an inability to create & sustain a viable social network there. We tried & tried. It didn't come to pass, for whatever reason.

Not going to Burning Man opened up the door to returning East. Did I want to? Was it just sentiment? I didn't know, but after awhile I started to believe it wasn't. Eventually we were investing the time & energy & money in moving to Boston that we had previous years spent getting to Burning Man.

We arrived July 1st. Near four months later, I can say it was worth it, unbelievably so. Boston hasn't changed al that much since I left in 2002, & I can say that the restlessness & loneliness that led me away have been dispelled by KD's dear companionship & my own deep gratefulness at having returned. I've lived years elsewhere & learned, finally, that this is my home.

The challenges of the every day remain. I haven't secured work yet. It takes time to settle fully in any new place (or one returned to).

But, sometimes, a decision is the right one. Resonates with rightness.

A story to illustrate this: there is not far from our home a miles-long mixed-use path called the Minuteman Bikeway. One of my favorite things about Burning Man was being able to ride for miles & miles without the danger of cars. When I discovered this bike trail nearby—it runs through several towns near Boston—I was thrilled. Amazed & thrilled. Where once was a railroad, a few years ago it had been converted to its current use. I ride this path several times a week—& will until, if, the snowy winter prevents it. I think of it as a gift, a nod from

whatever subtle, strange mysteries govern the Universe that, this time, I had a choice, & I made the right one.

In sum, back on home turf. Ready to make a long, good go. Say again: grateful. Grateful, & ready to roll far.

* * * * * *

Judih Haggai

hints of grey
birds play afternoon jazz
rice on the stove

* * *

upon arising
a cool glass of water
and a dose of poems

* * *

talk about evolution
it's now and it's always
only language changes

* * *

june birds
each takes a solo
before the heat of the day

* * *

the call of the crow
i peel away my dreams
and here i am

* * *

mouse tail
wags on blinds
daughter calls 911

* * *

snake at window
cool glass oasis
daughter is tempted

* * *

rollicking wild birds
ecstatic morning
weary i rise

* * *

fall onto the bed
bounce into morning
check for missing parts

* * *

oh mosquito
my ankle regrets
evening acquaintance

* * *

sell your soul
trade your mind
borrow emptiness

* * *

such small amounts
mercy in teaspoons
then an empty bowl

* * *

morning glory
hummingbird dances breakfast
every leaf alive

* * *

empty coffee cup
so soon it's over
nostalgia

* * *

small body
uncurls into morning
a pearl in the sun

* * *

ceiling fan
dances each moment
a true optimist

* * *

flower climbs up stalk
fall gift
kibbutz contentment

* * *

even miracles
tip hat
to sunset

* * * * * *

Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Four.

"Truth is a pathless land"
—Jiddu Krishnamurti, 1929.

The way is Dis-illusion (always
with you), & the flames will
dream your nights, & the rose petals
will consume them.

Wherefrom, reck the great tomes,
guides where to, but scant explain
(always) a fine torso (fine, fine) blindly
burning hours to excite & known (taste
it, shhh! touch it, taste it) (with you).

Way is disillusion, ever many musics
hum & away, cries from rooms
where some eat others (fine torso)
(consume rose petals), two claps,
want's strap (fine, fine) (taste it,
make it breathe wetly, want, know,
wait, beg, crawl for it, do) (always),
now sun again & a meal in
silence.

Is dis-illusion, the sands corrode tracks
laid by kings with gods for eyes & worms
for wills (such torsos, such rose petals,
such blood, such straps, will heaved
will apart, commanded by dream's
worst corruption into lust & power).

Dis-illusion, breathe twice & again in
this gallery (always) of (with) skulls
you. (always) Awkward rose petals,

delicious in gait (take it, there is a
moment, before the first wave falls
back, wordless gnashing foam, a cry
without clock or calendar *for fucking
more*—(always with you, just fucking
pose). Canvases of men long mixtured
in dust (tasted their petals too,
thrust with will superior, thrust from
faith, from a blindness fired between
lust & fanaticism). Voices sniff voices
(sniff low, sniff well) (with you), music
of a dreaming hour's passing, hours
of music hum & away (fucking pose
until a later hour when it's time
to perform, pretty & perform).

The way is Dis-illusion, no man will
gaze upon his world & wish to know
this well (too many rose petals, too
much lust in the world). Burn the
pages, burn the skulls, the sand,
the petals (mm, every one, lick teeth,
know what heats is like heated),
the canvas itself.

The way is Dis-illusion. Nod & burn
the canvas itself.

ci.

I remember everything too well, & more & more these days. I remember how you trembled. I remember your sweat. I listened to your breathing. You're fragile in size but I've thought all night about what I felt run through me as I carried you. Not fragility. So much power I thought I carried a young star.

But I was murky. You have to know. My thoughts were mushy with ideas & numbers. With your scent. Even now I taste something of it. When I see young, powerful things in any form. Trees, collies, even sunsets. I think about you & wonder.

I walked a long way after I left you. I had my things, my books, but not for long. The books, I mean. I was tired of how I'd come at it.

There was more. So much more, I'd held it there in my arms, when you were in my possession.

What I can't decide now is what next. You see, Maya, I walked a long way from you, another state, another city. I've learned how travel works, & what it isn't. A strong back & a closed mouth will get a man far like a fine ass & a smile will do for a woman.

Something went wrong this time, that's what I'm trying to tell you. I've left people behind before, jobs, pets, homes. I thought of it simply, a snake sheds his skin. Started a long time ago & now it's my way.

But I didn't shed you. I've lain with many girls & women in more kinds of days & nights than I want to mention, but something in you stuck.

I didn't rid myself of everything this time. Broke my own rule about possessions. I kept the blanket I wrapped you in when you appeared to me. You weren't an angel. You were better.

You were shameless. Without ego or shadow. That's what I'm trying to say to you, why you matter, why this damned blanket in my arms on this too-hot day as people in this park pass me thoughtless, I'm just another city tramp on a bench, but I hold it in my crouch, my hunch-shouldered defense anyone too near or curious. I remember how shameless you were. You were scared, the White Woods had nearly been your end, but you'd escaped & there was something in you they hadn't touched. I don't know what to think or call it.

I knew I held you & touched you as they hadn't. I didn't know & had no plan for this.

It was a long time ago, Maya. I was young in years. Maybe not like you, definitely not like you, but a boy for the most part. I was full of my training then. Thinking plans were the best strategy, gave a man his best topspin.

There was someone I knew then, like you. Shameless. Beautiful. Made my fingers & heart likewise hungry.

She made a choice one day, Maya. It's what I would tell you, what the purely protector part of me wants you to know. A choice. Magick manifests & a thousand kinds of noses raise & sniff.

Maybe you've made it by now but I don't believe that. I kept a few old skills & I trust them to tell me true when rare I ask.

You're what you were that morning, along your path.

The first time I abandoned a life, I didn't feel it til years later, & then I spent a yowling month in bourbon & cocaine.

The second time it felt like I was burning alive everything I'd ever known, loved or hated.

More after that but with less occurrence after awhile. Start asking life for less over time & it responds. Eventually forget how to ask anything significant of anyone.

And I thought I was able to cut the human factor out of it entirely. Save the world through spirit & mathematics, a formula that did away with the vagaries of flesh & want. Funny thing was, calculated from this angle, I concluded that the world was doomed ecologically.

How then to use numbers to jumpstart a mass spiritual awakening that would save the planet?

You saved *my life*, Maya, which is what I'm trying to say here. I felt every wanting, tendering, confused, spasming thing for you in ways that haven't settled since. I'm not the same in ways I can't control. I have more old skills still in hand almost than I'd rather. The places I went to learn, the people I learned from.

—Am I supposed to follow you, ally with you, or claim you? No answer. None. I'm stalled in this hour, stalled & confessed it. I've walked as far from you as I can & it did no good. Love, lust, just fucking *wonder*. Who had I become that morning that I was given you, & passed you along?

Calling something a re-birth is dangerous, makes every prior hour secondary, & none

are. Some more dramatic, some more memorable, but each important. The souls I've met who are really past teaching know this, say this, are humbled & awed by this.

But it was surely a turn. I arrived to you as much as you did to me. Now here's this hour, this wooden bench cradling me, these beautiful trees around me, large & small. Not telling but not indifferent. Nature is never indifferent to men. Sensitive to each of us in ways hardly few of us dare know.

So I don't know but maybe it's just that I don't accept that it's not possible I will see you again. Possible & where I am bound, not a plan. More the path ahead.

I nod. Look up, around. Begin to walk. Lots of sleeping men on benches. Some it's a break, some it's a home, for awhile.

Keep walking. Leaving this city won't be too hard.

I'll walk my path, Maya, for you, toward you, because of what that morning keeps amplifying through me. I'll find you, or find something.

I keep waking up more & more, & I don't know what else to call it.

Maybe it's you. A cross, a lover, a forest to lose & listen in. I don't know. Life's better that way, Maya.

cii.

A film comes on that is clearly amateurish, a shaky camera, the whirring sounds of audio equipment, a cough, the narrator reads stonily, as though unpracticed, from a script: "In the White Woods there is an old empty temple, it is more a clearing shaped like a temple, only full visible in highest moonlight."

A pause in narration. Murky shapes solidify, a moment of a peaceful place, in moonlight, then a cry, a timeless cry of the stronger claiming the weaker, it repeats, echoes, distorts, then is gone.

Shapes, dark ghosts pass quickly & countlessly through the peaceful place & leave a sense of discontent. The camera is now steady, the light sharpens but loses its glow, its ageless patina. More artificial, electric, the wind & sense of growing, moving things is gone. Now a room, now breathing, eager, uncertain breathing. Now a bed, blurry, large, & a shape, a torso, nude but still undefined.

The voice resumes once more, & a sense of its presence in the room, the torso responds to its narration, flinches; then, as though curious, leans nearer as though to listen more closely.

"Tonight I am mortal. I know the starshine will outlast me, the high desert scrub, the long chasing wind. Some last day will come, some sad or sudden hour, & what next in soil or sky or else."

The torso shifts, & shifts again. Human, long hair, slender. Breathing quick, rushed & alert. The room shimmers in & out with this breathing, less & less solidity.

"Tonight I am at peace with all this, riding a full moon into eclipse's grasp—"

"Noooooo" moans the torso, a reedy girlish voice thrashing the bed's breadth even as its grows larger & less substantial—"going & gone in many but a few ways—" "Noooooo"—"Neither the suffering nor its explain, books glowing in shrines or scented icons." The torso stops thrashing helpless & starts fighting, for balance, for controlled movement.

"Tonight I can only think: empty the temples of men. They welcome when they should push along. Empty the temples of men, whatever's been learned, whether it's enough."

Torso rises now in rags & flames, carrying all along, a force now, little shaky. "Take prayers & praise alike to the woods"—rises, begins to walk—"the surf, to the desert under full moon"—rags & flames, the bed crumbles behind her—"I am remembering what shined days & what only blunt lust"—she walks powerfully through the doorway, leaving no room behind—"fine-grooved hustle of a deep gene's idea"—

Silence. She's gone.

Then a whir, a blur & softening into moonlight, the temple-shaped clearing visible again, empty, then shapes & sparks, the acceleration of time into something impossible, the transformation of space, & the voice its last cry found in starlight upon which new forms wil form & emerge: "Give up the gods as child's scrabble for a safe place. Empty the temples of men!"

"So some temples are good & some are bad!"
"Yah, I think so. The ones in the White Woods are good."
"But they're not buildings!"
"I know. That's what they're saying."
"But why? There are some pretty nice churches around here. I don't go but I walk by 'em. What's the point here?"
"It's just a TV show or something. Don't take it to heart."
"We been watching it for a long time now. You know there's something spooky about it. You can't just call it a TV show & that's that."
"I don't know what else to say. It doesn't help to worry about it."
"Yah, I suppose so."
"Have another beer. Barkeep! Another round here please."
"Nah! I'm good. I gotta get going."
"Already? It's early. Tomorrow's Sundee. You gotta woman on the clock waiting for you in that stinkpot you live in?"
"Yah. That must be it. 'Night."
"'Night. Hey, barkeep, can we get *Sportscenter* on the TV?"

I leave but I'm not going home. The more weird shit going on around here the less I stick around T's drinking. I'm getting pretty done being always half in the bag when the bag isn't very interesting anymore.

It's that hotel. Noah Hotel. No-Tell they call it. I'm pretty sure there's a lot of weird shit up there & didn't used to be. Not just the usual whores & crack & all that. I know there's more.

But how to find out? Walk in the front door & rent a room? Start sniffing around like Columbo?

What do I want to know? Do I want in? Is this where I break with my past, my life? I know some things are wrong but it's easy right now, finally, & if I walk in there it won't be.

"Good evening, sir, how can I help you?"

"Got a vacancy?"

"Let me check."

"No. Wait. Let me look around a minute, OK?"
"Very well, sir. Come see me if you want that room."
"I will. Thanks."
"No problem. You're welcome here."

ciii.

More a beast than a man haunts the clearing shaped like a temple in the White Woods. Imagine a being shaped like every creature & creation the world! To have fired through bug & collie & raked ravines through canyons & given the Universe the gift of growth, decay, moving light, want & fecundity, tendered one with a day's life & another with a century's & another with many, some to fly & some rooted, the blind feeders crushed beneath the boots of the troubadours of men—

Imagine this great beast encompassing all & releasing the seed of each, deeper into what it is that knows no center or favorite, feels when foes clash & one falls, when two mate, when one dies in this shadow as another shadow cradles its new birth—

Old tomes call mankind a triumph, a paramount creation of a man-shaped god, conscious & therefore king—

step into this temple-shaped clearing, now! kneel! know you know nothing & your gift is not ignorance but doubt!

for in this open space pulses with unfettered intensity the beast's push & purpose, all may pass through freely, none will perish while doing so, & there is no explain for this, no answer to its why, no what at all—

find here then not the beast but broad, plain evidences, broader & plainer perhaps because nothing lives here permanently, what passes through, continues—

thus the greed of some men believe here is power's center, great, supreme power's center, to be claimed, to be harnessed, named & ridden wild, ridden far across the world & elsewhere—

There are shades & sparks here
to remember, shades & sparks
without meaning or ends,
a beat, a breath,
what touches each to all?
empathy, & brighter, empathy, & all brighter. Shades & sparks tall men will swat away for a moment, & another, a beat, a breath, but no accomplishment, this is no place men can overturn & rule.

It breaks down here, simply put, laws & the linearity of text, all easy coherence, there is the chaos, crazy fucking chaos, of feeling it close, being close to the—

what? A source with no center? How then a nearer & nearer?

No explain, no narrative, just the acceleration of time into something impossible, transformation of space

just a whisper & hardly that:
"step kind around the nests."

Stalled, tonight, this hour, in the clearing shaped like a temple in full moonlight. The shades, the sparks, surrounded by them, stalled, the temptation to stay to avoid the morrow's daylight hours where men seek to shape like gods, reck us all gods in every dim & blaring gesture, fine & funny, soil to sky.

Neither stay here, nor move blandly through those men's tough, mere hours, will the beast hear & respond to a prayer, some cry, would this be the beast too?

Acceleration of time, transformation of space

Would beast even be the word to tell, & if not what word? Best to say brokenly & some wrongly that there is a place in the White Woods whose presence is known by full moonlight alone, its shape by what surrounds not what it contains, & what is within it is present only by residual effect

yet its pull, its force, acceleration of time, transformation of space,

breaks down here, laws & linearity,
crazy fucking chaos, closer to the—

look it's that room in the No-Tell!
look it's run through *TripTown* & **RemoteLand**!
look the beast fills every dream
of Maya's now when she can &
dares sleep—

others call her the key while she wonders if she's really the conduit—

civ.

In the moment before, there was some other, lesser furor, this is how it works. Chaos trumps what was happening before it. A phone call, a car bomb, birth, death, new love. Trumps, owns, re-invents. So yes.

There were two memories, at least, one of massed clouds in childhood before a summer storm. The other of an old relative (then chaos.), spittle & wrinkles (breaking through now), tears & obscure regrets (now.)

Then chaos. The old world remains
as dried blood, a strange headline.
Alien, nearly untranslatable.

The beast steps in, wakes, returns,
whatever one need say to describe
it, the chaos, moment belongs to
the beast.

Much will return, tangle with the new. The alien sheen to it all will diminish. There will be sentiment, gaps, options.

As much as anything, the chaos moment each of these persons has felt—the krak! like a gunshot—was the emergence or re-emergence of the Beast in their days—& since—this is an important point—the beast emerges in chaos & recedes a bit & more in days but its effects perpetuate—

Sometimes its echoes will reverse fade—the beast will clarify & its power will pulse rawly visible again—

What then—something has happened—the beast is amplifying again—these past pages have been owned by this—I won't say I know full what this means or what to do with it—maybe knowing isn't it—isn't close—fair enough—

there are traps
there are doors
sometimes they resemble
each other—

this counsel remembered seems again relevant—for coming pages-

This all is mulling, is a sort of putting off—nothing will be the same—then chaos. Then, then.

I love them, these characters, these people, & I don't know their fates or nexts perfectly—now knowing means I find out as the pages cume—

It occurs to me to wonder if the beast is good or evil, at least to address it—good & evil distinguish, simplistically, what does not in truth divide easily.

What to come, then, not by terms of good & evil but for each as he perceives. I wish for their survival & prosperity. But of course I would.

Anyway, now continue to point.

cv.

Cup of liquid glass, drink, & for an eternally long moment know, remember, all runs, flows, walls, doors, drink, it goes, the certainty, & certainty's despair, & certainty's comfort, all goes, would you drink?

I drink, I must, I want to know, know how much I don't know, what shatters the familiar

streets & hours from within, what? I want know how much I don't know. Tell me so I can better not know.

The night is cold & reminds me of a thousand other nights. Other places I sat alone, & did not know, & wished to, & some of these nights drank cups of liquid glass

to talk to those nights, back & forth,
what to say, jump the bridge?
what to say?

How everything crosses obviously at this moment, a fist of liquid light crossed the TV screen showing *TripTown* & passes through the screen where **RemoteLand** plays inside the pages written by Cosmic Early within those written by David Time read above bottom & below to thousands by Global Wall in a painting Preacher made that night in that chicken shack on that desert border town, painted the flames longer before they'd arrived he'd seen it all finally, what he'd come for—finally, open wide, here it/everything came.

No longer mortal, now a melting, cooling star (would you drink?) Warping into a wordless glow, he traded the human world that night for a perfect sheen, devolved, evolved, no fucking words, perfect sheen, smooth rim to luring depths

an ocean, a sky, perfect fragment
explaining one speck to all

Paula ate him slowly, gagged a little but she had to keep up with Rosie, go where Rosie went, know what Rosie knew, & he moved Paula's hand rapidly for a long stretch, she'd brought her artbag though Rosie'd laugh—

"You'll never make an art tonight when we eat those"
"Why not?"
"It's not how it works. Maybe later, a few days, months."
"I'm going to try. If it's trash, I'll call it trash. I'm no fool, right?"
"No, you're not. Well, not mostly."

They'd saved up their bus fare to get to Fort Stevens in Oregon, & then set a simple deception rolling about how & why they were going. Fake emails, Photoshopped brochures, & the smarts to tell nobody the truth.

"We tell nobody."
"& we stick together the whole time."
"No boys."
"Hey! None?"
"None. Or we don't go."
"OK. I agree. Let's spit hands on it."

They kept their vow to stick close to each other the whole way & if they had not become briefly separated in the woods up there, something else would have happened. What Rosie saw, what Paula didn't.

cvi.

(When all below was gone there was still sky. We collected the many clouds, wisps & fists of them, named & grouped the dawn & dusks because we were still men & women.)

Bowie looks around. Nothing tells him the when or where. Looks at his hands, yes, they're wrong for what he last remembers, they're too young. But how to figure this?

Someone is talking. "What are the years? Does anyone know? There's a presumption of purpose, outcome but no agreement, no proof. So there's the hustles of faith, of promise, hustles that play on vanity, fear, hope. Think any of this is new? The King crying to God's love & protection as his soldiers slaughter thousands, millions. The women shaking her ass for coin? The preacher in his small castle whining holy about humility & poverty, & the someday-to-come that justifies sacrifice? The take on every corner, one's purse, another's freshness, a third's shaggy talent?"

Nothing but his too-young hands & the voice, otherwise Bowie seems blind & deaf. Paralyzed, if he has a body at all.

"What then, you're wondering, but the sure path from first squall to quiet or brutal or sudden end? What then? Anything a choice not countless taken, & another, & another?"

The smell is moldy, earthy, something.

"There is a choice but it's not obvious & it's not out there in the wise men or the tomes. It may be one or many. It may fail."

Mushrooms. Fucking mushrooms.

"Nothing said here will guide you. Just a hint, it's somewhere, whatever it is. Yours to chase or not. Many kinds of good & failed lives. But there's something else too. Something else."

(One day a rainbow & lightning, it all came back. Even dreaming that night, nobody spoke.)

Bowie snaps forward again, bodiless still for the most part. There are two events going on here, he's now figured that, as though his mind rocks between two worlds, two dimensions, whatever, fucking Mulder.

Think! Stop. Steady. Think. Breathe. Waver between the two. One smells like mushrooms but when did they ever talk like that? Talk, heh. The other is music, he's really *not present* in that world, just an absorbing force of sugary doomsy words.

"Or choose to travel with us, young pilgrim, where we go, what we seek, what great thing you will become with us."

Shit. They're not talking to me. They're talking to him! To Preacher! & he's fucking listening.

(Nobody spoke, even dreaming that night. It had all come back, by lightning, by rainbow.)

That's *mine*. Fucking figures. Now it's looping back on me. But fuck a duck I don't have time for it, gotta save that damned Preacher. Something's wrong, *mushrooms don't talk like that*.

Bowie now tunes deep in, forgets his hands & tunes into that smell, pushes, focuses, *buries* his awareness in that smell & the other world looses, loosens, begins to let go, its music, its metaphor-tangled promise, maybe come back, will come back, come find me again, I have to save my friend, please understand, more important in this moment

yah, time, ha, but let me go some & remember me & please near me again,

buries in the scent until he is back somewhere more familiar, not arrived fully, no actual body to arrive with in truth, ah yes, Oregon, the girls who found them growing peacefully in the woods, well, no, one girl, another a bit later, something more to the details, maybe later they'll come, now long travelled to their town on desert's edge & a full moon's night, of course, & he was eaten by the girl who'd found them, & the Preacher by the other girl, & it was alright for him til it wasn't til the Preacher got trouble

"I have to go back."
"How? Why?"
"He's in trouble. They're both in trouble, something's wrong. Badly wrong."
"What do we do?"
"We go back, slowly."
"But I was there! You saw it too. Rainbows & lightning! We were close! Both of us!"

"I know. *I know*. We have to go back. They need us."

Silence. I waited. Rosie demanded I help her leave a trail. From back there, as far as we've gotten, every step to her town, to exactly where she, her body, sat. I nodded. I didn't need one but she did. I knew she'd go back without me but maybe we'd both get there separately. Meet up again after tonight.

Right now that would be a fancy, no more. I led her back, it was hard, we'd been deep. Rosie was hurt a few times in ways she couldn't know. I was gentle with her, rough on what resisted. No liking for a retreat in these kinds of spaces. You get on board, you ride to the end. Otherwise, you get hurt a little. Or more. I did what I had to but it would cost me in time. I guess really every fucking move from cradle to grave bears a cost one way or another. I just banked on my reputation, & a few favors—

this makes no sense, does it? What the fuck am I talking about huh? Yah, OK,

we returned, it was hard, but made it, not fully in time.

cvii.

Benny Big Dreams knows Jack has jumped the bridge, but does not know how chaotic the effects will be. Right now there is the fact, & the waiting.

He lives nowhere precisely. Has no home to yearn toward or try to build new from memory & wish.

But maybe there are places of comfort, places he tends toward a little more than others.

They have different qualities, these places, & mood draws him to one or another.

He didn't think Jack would do it, didn't believe it. Saw where Jack'd been bound & knew his demise waited there. Humans call it the White Woods as though that means or explains anything about it. Not a place to go for them, though sometimes they pass through. But Jack had been *bound* there, by trickery but nonetheless.

Now he's turned elsewhere, done what was not expected, set chaos into motion.

Chaos brings the Beast, Benny shudders. Not in danger himself, the Beast has never shown interest in Dreamland, but Benny trucks with the world humans perceive, their collective waking dream, & the Beast is moving thither again.

What first caught the Beast's reck, crushed bloom's scent, stretched blouse, maybe a weightless laugh frosting the night air? Yes, perhaps? The Beast bodies & multi-bodies an hour, a day, less & less for many years but there was a scent, was a laugh & they left markings where little possible, a crevice in hide unmarkable, at least in a long while, but the crevice had no further history until this same scent, sweating, fear-pocked, crossed through the temple-shaped clearing. A scent fecund & terrified, the Beast manifest in the clearing, there was a great noise which echoed like furiously hard rain in disparate places, wanna know when it changed more than every minute every mile? That scent woke the Beast up, it remembered, the crevice in its hide blew deep & wide through, & on, & on, & on.

Why always pursued she does not know, nobody explains though many will advise her how to be chased gracefully, how to profit most in being caught, will joke with her if she would about the chase itself, try to chat it into the ordinary skin of things, this is how it is, how this is done, how to work it better over time—

Maya sniffs. This must be dreaming because she is very much more powerful than waking. Muscles worked hard & beautifully, hair somehow both blonder & pinker, she sniffs & knows what's near. The clearing. The Beast. Is she naked in these dreams? Doesn't quite know, doesn't seem important.

What is that she moves, not a panic like it was, but strongly, willfully, in the depths of the White Woods sight is the least sense, she sniffs & she listens, her body aware tautly, hard, glistening with attent, whoever she is in these dreams, what the path from waking's stumbles to here, to this, it happens often—

The Beast pursues at a lope, interested in learning for now how she moves, how she thinks, she feels touched from afar, stroked like a prize, she learns there is pain in resisting, doesn't & the strokes learn but do not go further—when did these dreams begin? It was Dylan. Not his doing but his simple coming.

Until then nothing, nobody profoundly other had touched her, nothing on her nearest side of the Universe, she was contained all in, then Dylan & now that boy walked around with some of her in possession.

The Beast is nearer this time, less lope, more pursuit, she sniffs & the scent is familiar, she knows it from other hours, cajoling whispering hours, power's intimacy, knows how it will press & press, & no nearness near enough—

She opens wide her senses, the known & unknown ones, feeling for a new crevasse, a move to make virtually as she invents it—

something—someone—he's near—she realizes suddenly he's always near—this place, kind of place is his—now to risk that he isn't worse—the Beast presses, nearly a physical presence now, she decides & suddenly cuts toward whomever tis who watches—right at him hard

A crash— a blow— crunch— chaos— then silence.

Rosy-lit room. Dark wood panelled. She rises, hard to know if the girl of waking or the woman of dreams, shaken, staggers into one of the two armchairs. Slumps. A thin blue vase on the teak table between the chairs. Slumps, waits.

A voice at first, not a present man, just a voice. Talks steadily as though he has been for hours & "Genes & chance number up the world, between extinction & the long cry for a familiar god's knowable craft. What was it, *what was it*, those hours between scents, what between the chase & the cage? What else haunts blood & bones & talks nightly in dreams" he is old, he is an old powerful man regarding her like a pink morsel, eat, teach, crush, no matter, blinks, looks again, considers. Speaks slowly.

"Are cock & cunt alone enough to bone up the world & drive purpose through its wide, wild flesh?"

For a moment she is beneath his torso, her legs wrapped around his hips, the thrust of his cock so massive within her that she has no excess of it, she is simply what sheathes his cock as it thrusts. Blinks, looks again, armchairs. Oh.

cviii.

How to explain it, what the years mean? Some eat others.

"—Red Sox are up 10-1 in Game 1 of the World Series here in beautiful Fenway Park in Boston, Massachusetts on a wet—"

He nods at the numbers, signs, notices the gulls shat the windows again. This high up even.

The radio cuts to a commercial, several, home loans, cock enlargers, dental health plans.

Nods, signs, better numbers soon.

The radio is pink, shaped like a cat's face, is old, like a thrift store relic but he doesn't know where it came from. Was it here when he took this office?

Some eat others.

He knows & does not know what goes on here. Human activity, transaction, is multiply & thoroughly filtered before it reaches him, electronic spreadsheets of numbers.

Maybe the pink cat clock is from someone he'd rather not know about. Something maybe that happened in this office one night, or many, long ago, or not, & its only residua was a figure on a spreadsheet, maybe this clock too, maybe a scar, maybe a dream or several. Residuum?

A dream or more. He nods, signs, there are money problems. Problems? No. But there is a need to grow or wither always in business. There are pockets of untapped profit here. Requests he had previously disregarded.

Men with tastes for consumption, some like his own, that he had wanted to keep far, others far worse, others he would not wish to encounter save by higher numbers on these fucking electronic spreadsheets.

Some eat others. Others will join in, or watch, & pay a good cold dollar.

"We're back at Fenway—"

He nods, signs, better numbers soon—

Some eat others. Dreams are blood & bone, maps & harvest, moving glance of a pale slip, a smile, a smile luring with centuries of force—

(It was lucid. At least. Dreamspace live & not a least thought what to do with it.)—

An ache as it turns aside, want's hustle buried high & low—

(live fucking dreamspace I looked at you we exchanged thoughts why now why this late ugly year in things? We don't even fucking count years anymore! Why bother? We did it, broke through time & space, or just plain broke it, our belief in it or part of it, I don't know—but damnit dreamspace I was arrived with you there we began & finished each other's sentences in that dream-room—

—& I offered you chocolate cake—you smiled no—you never liked sweets much—

there was a large raw spider on the ceiling I gave chase

didn't crush it til it was on the floor

We arrived! dreamspace! Not this broken world of useless clocks I've lived to see without you!

Floors below, still others years going on & I don't how or if to reach them, what would happen if I descended—how is this *hotel* growing taller through space & time with each floor accelerating & disintegrating faster than the one below?

What did we do here? Does it have to do with those damned Woods? That clearing? What we tried to kill there? Did we do all this by killing it or failing to? Which would be worse?

"Dreams are blood & bone. Skinny up gods for comfort if little explain" now Dylan is terrified—something is stirring in the dark—he was at Luna T's trying to follow Maya's dream-sent directions—he's still there partially but there was an interruption—

"Mystic shades of winter on city streets" the words plucked him & he nearly gone went, left his body huddled somewhere deep in T's under a tree—the rest hears the old man's voice—follows, "Distant torrents roiling high plains" the old man is terrified & it's to do with Maya "Touch of flesh to flesh, cults to why" each word broiling mad with terror he's on the streetcar, a ragged kid with a tall pack on his back, a worn scent about his skin—

a companion—too? She's talking like the old man, low, as they sway the train's long night run—"What the years mean? Shine, ache, what strange lasts." Her face is young & uncreased, & familiar—

"Cor . . . delia?" does he even whisper it? She is distracted, still talking "Hurry & laughter, nearly & always, nights sugared hours long with arrival & consume" she's shifting, from ragged traveller to a leather body tight garment, tall black boots, whiskers, face tinted pink & singing "the many forgetting rest. Some eat others" she nears him, close, fecund scent hooking taking "some" closer "eat" closer "others" he feels her body press him hard, there is disintegration the train is rising, "Blood & bone" consume, feed, so close, this torso untried by any yet how it heats hard, how knows what to claw alluring deep within him "some eat others" "so close" "shine, ache, what strange lasts" he has to go, this isn't helping Maya "Touch of flesh to flesh, cults to why" she has no leather costume on, there is no train, "want's hustle buried high & low there is take in this but what was hers is now his, hands grasp small high breasts fingers squeeze & dare moan, artfully pinch nipples, she leans back as his thighs demand near "Dreams are blood & bone, maps & harvests" pressing torso to torso moan bitch there is resist in her & a little fight but he induces release, tinders up her hard deep hungers "some eat others" & a flash of blonde & pink from somewhere, that window as this train disintegrates by on its rise up "How to explain what the years mean" & Dylan twists twice right, left & again right & leaps back, back, back, lets it all go, so soft, fresh & tight, lets it all go for that blonde & pink, *she's fucking in danger*—

cix.

How Jethro gets into the chicken shack, even if he was really there, what he was, why Rosie returned to find him possessing Paula, what this moment actually meant, or even looked like, what this did to Preacher, how it wronged him, to give it words where there were none—Bowie still had no answers—

For a moment it made sense, there were ways things got explained. He had known her mother but she was a bad drunk, a hitter, real mean woman, not very big but an easy turn to find a gun or knife at hand, or just crack the top of the beer bottle in her hand—

Jethro had liked Paula well enough but had loved her mother for real, put up with some hard, bad shit to work it out. It hadn't & hadn't even come close.

Paula's mother finally went too far & got put up to the women's prison for a couple of years. Paula lived with indifferent relatives & did as she pleased.

What she pleased to do was try & get Jethro & take him for reasons unclear to any & all. Give him the love her mama hadn't? Rebel with an older man? Had she simply liked him?

You don't ask heart & loins those questions because nothing answered will be true. Heart & loins don't act from visible reasons, easy logic. But had they? Did even Rosie know for sure? They ran together but each had a closet of hours. Sometimes did tell eventually, good & fucking high, probably good & fucking horny too, but not always.

Yet here she was, in this strange clear moment, on her knees, clothes pushed some off, enough for the tastier parts to be touchable or grabbable, the hight tits, the full round ass, the dark pussy shaved to an artful tuft, instructions from cyberspace on that one, on her knees before Jethro, him leaning forward, hands lightly on her shoulders, his surprisingly hard & large cock a deep moaning pop she sucked with piston precision & the beautiful scrape of gleaming white teeth—

His face disappeared first, then the rest of him seeming at random, til he was gone & she was revealed still fairly clothed & retching in a corner's shadow—

The mushrooms let Rosie arrive, return, rush to help & comfort Paula but Bowie they kept, they took, he saw the shack fall away, saw Rosie a moment, full-bodied, a distance now between them & what man in him saw no blue jeans, no ruffled blouse, no pink underwear but an all woman's body, girl's tight flesh, fresh, fecund, spirit wrapped in blood shot through with cosmos' best sugar—

Shrooms took him far that night, he'd gotten Rosie back to help Paula, & now she knew about Preacher too, but—

Took, travelled, near, far, none of it really applies to shroom space. Now, then, hours, past, future. Bowie was gone elsewhere in too-brief sum. He hadn't been back since, not even close. Hadn't even been a body much less a man for some years. There weren't much in way of memories, gleams of sun, hard ferment of soil,

rain, he now loves rain so much it exhausts me crying, with—

"Who I was is who I am yet who I am isn't who I was while blood wilds streams through rock of years &

even
the brightest thing
is fading with a hunger
nothing tame can hold back
nor wild can maintain—"

the shrooms eventually re-shaped him into a man, let him again walk human shaped & mortal seeming—

But he was in a sense a man-shaped mushroom as he'd been a mushroom-shaped man—

he had achieved the union the agency had sent him toward, that Preacher had dreamed—

Gaining a human will again he was less a disguise & more a real man—a both & either—what? What precisely? He didn't know, simply grew used to what had happened for a long while—

It was his romance with Gretta Black, his sojourn as a regular at Luna T's Cafe that had catalyzed his eventual flight back to Rosie's & Paula's desert town. The night he first coupled with Christa had made return inevitable.

"Does the heart eat its way out at last & men simple call it death? Do bones fall to forever dreaming without days to divide & distract?

"Who I was & what I am
a beggar scholar's work
of years, faith of glass"

To return to the chicken shack was to try & grasp it all again, what became of Preacher, where Rosie had gone, he wanted to again meet the shrooms & not fear, neither dragged to them nor flight—

"Here I am" he whispered,
breaking script a moment,
"Maybe you're really angels
& I am blind. Here I am."

The movie's visuals crackle & break & there is only text against a dark pulsing, a throb that convulses the screen itself, how?

RemoteLand now had a theme, hadn't seemed to have one before. Once heard, it would seem to pop up all about, grocery stores, empty hallways, dreams, more of them

Pressed, one could not say how the melody went, or if there were words sung. More an intractable sense of its desolate space, long suffering nights with no answer in starlight or to come at dawn, freezing landscapes where everything living hid away or froze without a mercy, the deep harshnesses of human beliefs, those that press guilt, denial, sin, pleasure's deferment, the fool's try at any knowing—

Music of hard want to make, to possess, to twine burst an unknown hour's knots,

(Nothing, more & more)

undo the collision of breath
futile heated with diminishing
figures, unknown torsos.

(The eye cups, & easily possesses,
what the hand stays.)

Reck the empty temples, woods of a single tree, oceans at war, great cry for more violence at a continent's distance.

(render flesh from bone, blood of its life, & nothing of the Mystery tells, nothing is left. Nothing, more & more.)

(Nothing. More & more) Nothing
(more & more)

Burning villages on private maps,
not shown by lights,
what I was
what I am
who you are

Then a long arcing view of the White Woods, suddenly, texture to this view, rushing over endless trees, sometimes close thrashing through the brush & branches, sometimes lifting up what seemed miles, on & on,

til smoke, a pouring sparking smoke into the White Woods, catching here & there, then more places, dry places conflagrating & catching to others, faster the flight over, faster & faster, more of what below burning or burnt out, til less & less Woods & more & more blackened earth, no life, no growth (*Nothing* more & more)

"What now?"
"I don't know."
"Is this still the acid?"
"It's all the acid. There isn't anything else."
"Ever?"
"There never was anything else. We're just not fooled about it anymore."
"What do we do?"
"We watch. If there's more we'll find out this way."
"Why can't I see you? Why can't I see my body? I can't even *fucking* feel it!"
"Just watch. That's what we have to."

cx.

For a moment they are together in the rosy-lit panelled room. His shivering sweet smile, her pink striped blonde hair. Been so long.
"Dylan." "Maya."
Each in an armchair angled toward the other but afraid to move. Whatever this is, to hold it, stretch it longer—
"I've been trying to find you."
"I have too."
"I don't know what all this is, Maya."
"It has to do with me. I don't know why."
"Are you scared?"
"They won't hurt me. Maybe they can't."

"Whey did they let us see each other now?"

She snaps their freeze, leans forward, her purple eyes sparking. "Something wild between us. Maybe others too. I don't think we're in this alone." She leans further to touch him, his smile warm, innocent, wishing.

Now the old man again, breathing hard, badly labored.

Nothing. More & more.

His breath foul, old, somehow sad, heats through her clothes, trembles her. "Something wild is your chance. Tameless hours, tameless movements, muscular, chaotic reach, systemless roots through dreams & stars, through happy frenzies & frenzied woes" his breath nearly flesh on bone, Maya groped, squeezed, "Reignless hours, nearest green visions, tuckless pink ecstasy" old fingers roughly squeeze her shoulders, breasts, hips "tameless hours" now letting go a bit, "The Beast" "The White Woods" "the Bridge of Glass" "No-Tell" "Luna T's" "the key, the conduit" "Americus" "roseate chamber" "roseate chamber" "roseate"

silence. Maya's eyes still closed.
A last whisper. "Be what you believe in those tameless hours, Maya, when you are the Beast too"

shift. again. again. pages of tameless hours, land back at Luna T's Cafe & old friend Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker caught raising his hand for attention, expected attention, & Mr. Bob the barman gesturing those who don't know to silence.

"You stood up, shaky, ignorant of the praise, a lost year, a lost child, one day died a careless death.
"I was a youth a sinful new burst of flailing wants & curiosities, not the bright brilliance of a child nor yet the organized fortress of a man. I suffered defenseless for moving flesh & reachless thoughts of a God to explain & advise.
"To remember your steps, lost brother, new hours, ambers you in victory." Pauses. Then roars low. *"I held out my hands to you, bid come hither, & you did, an unsure but sturdy step at a time, You came, & you smiled, & we triumphed."* Pause. Full voiced: *"Ambers you in victory! Despite the rest. Spite the rest!"* Pause. Now hardly a whisper: *"Wild thing, now you rest."*

"Anniversary of his brother's death," Mr. Bob tells a familiar drinker. A trucker.
"How many years gone now?"
"Too many. Some other world remembered."
Drinker nods. "We all carry one of those around."
Knickerbocker sits back down. His coffee mug is refilled. No whiskey in it for several years now.

Who was that brother? Why today remember him. Why had he shown Mr. Bob that old picture? He sips, & doesn't know. He'd lied. It was no anniversary he knew. He'd found the

photo in a book, one he'd long rejected. It had fallen off the shelf of his bookcase, from what few books he'd kept. From thousands once to maybe half a dozen or dozen. So many rejected, found offering too many answers when the world begged better questions, better *awe*. He sips.

"You OK?"

"Another wild thing is in danger, Charles. Watch for her. Watch closely."

"The young fellow we've seen a few times."

"He as well."

Sips. Too many lost worlds.

cxi.

Eventually a silence, an agreement of some kind. A hush, a deeper hush, an emptying of sound, now no sound, now there never was sound. A gap. Fissure then it slices through, divides, high, wide, deep.

No time passes, no before & after. Still this gap, this fissure, this chasm, no words, no labels, no descriptions scientific or mystical. None. Nothing.

Nobody notices, nothing is different. Not a blink's length, does not happen in time.

The first after to find something is Benny Big Dreams. Not his real name, more one he uses among humans, give a flair to the terror & joy they tremble both to know better. He knows something & remembers he suspected something was coming. Now it's come.

What then? Is anything different? Yes, everything, there was a shift, not measurable for all shifted. Yet.

Now Benny Big Dreams frets, not fear yet, but restless & a feeling of dangerous ignorance, slight, slight.

Even this line, these words across this page, on the other side of the rift, neither time nor space but yes, true.

Well, then.

Return to a try at origins, again. First is music, & I don't know why. Men breathe together, hearts beat close, love & fear swoon each high & low, the reeds & crickets play the wind—

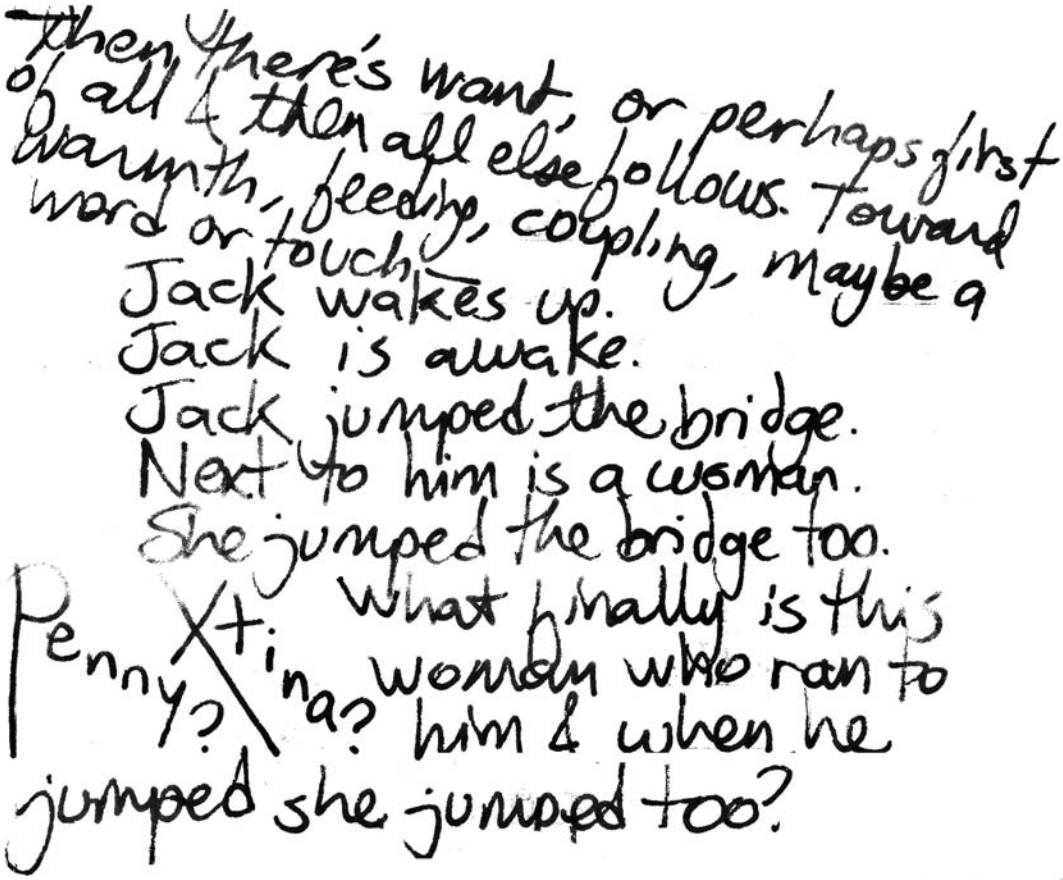
She approaches, gauzed in pink blonde & black, approaches Benny Big Dreams, strong & unafraid, let it go, or perhaps the rift pulled the remain from her, approaches, together, grounded, asleep in a dark place in the No-Tell, approaches Benny Big Dreams, & says, "I'm Maya. I don't know if I need your help or you need mine."

—birds gossip

& mate with whistles, there is music, first, mystery's thrum—

Or maybe dreams, how they wantless occur in man & beast, how they lawless urge, tug a body closer to its hid cavern's wish—she found Preacher, *found him* at last, at Luna T's Cafe's bar, sitting before an untouched glass of rye. Sitting, staring. She sat on the stool next to his, & said nothing. Tweety Bird rested lightly in her lap, did not move or topple over, there was agreement in this. Genny looks straight ahead, what words after everything else? "You've come. You waited for me & I didn't appear. Now you've come. The reasons in all this aren't pretty." A

pause, a long, long pause. Beats, breaths. “I can’t ask you to come with me but you may choose to.” —— a heart to the great open air, empty a long clear cry of its stones, of any fist’s strength to stop.


Then there's want, or perhaps first of all & then all else follows. Toward warmth, feeding, coupling, maybe a word or touch.
Jack wakes up.
Jack is awake.
Jack jumped the bridge.
Next to him is a woman.
She jumped the bridge too.
What finally is this woman who ran to him & when he jumped she jumped too?
Penny? Tina?

He suddenly shakes her. “Which are you? Tell me. I don’t know anymore! Tell me! Fuck!” She moans, still turned away. “I’m hurt,” she whispers—that seems a moment to arc from cradle to cradle, strike wars & wakes, shared breath, close beats, prisons & tombs alike—“Who the fuck are you?” “I want to come with you.” “You’re in danger, Maya. I think we all are.”

Of course there’s the learning & madness some get in twining the exotic molecule or rarer see—Charlie Pigeonfoot is still captive or maybe something else, it’s been dark so long he is forgetting all else & he is alone for longer stretches with his finger-touched possessions but he sees the golden eagle nearing this place with an anger Charlie cannot control, he is the eagle’s child, there is nothing left when the eagle is done, Charlie sees that, sees forward in time to what this eagle will do, then doubts he sees this, yet waits, & gently touches his things—Through certainty’s clouds WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?, through the hard kings throned in sunlight to reveal beautiful dust I will do as you say but there are some people, nameless beautiful dust blows off,

dance now! dance now!

None of it explains, just clanging lights in a mind's sky, Bowie's tried it all ways & still nothing. Nothing here takes, how was it, they'd agreed on her path back, & now he wanted to find her, believing she'd gone back, on to that place, its rainbows & lightning

"Aren't you just guessing?"
"Yes."
"How will this help anyone, Garrish?"
"Oh. You."
"Did you think it was the mushrooms?"
Laugh. "I guess I did."
"No."
"Which one?"
"Soulard."
"Ahh. Him."
"Writer."
"Yes. Believing all this to be yours, dependent on you, limited by you too."
"Isn't it?"
"You're part of it. You write some of it down here. But, no. There's more to it than you."
"I think I know that."
"Maybe you do."
"I want to conjure the magical. That's the phrase in my head today. Make anything of it?"
"Conjure your awareness of it?"
"I don't know."
"It's all magical. Least of it, worst of it. Brutalest, stupid human acts. All magical."
"What then?"
"Purpose. Explanation. Cross the abyss between souls, make new colors, better music. All that."
"Why follow Rosie? Tell me."
"I don't know. There's something wrong. She's part of it, the solution, the victim, I don't know. Something happened here that night & my friend wasn't the same. And I wasn't."
"Preacher?"
"Yeah. It went wrong for him. It went wrong for me too when I couldn't help. I let us get separated."

None of it explains, just clanging lights in a mind's skies, no more to work with than tools in ground that may or may not be, show me the spell or devilling conjure can say other certain.

"Yes. Like that."
"Tonight an old village burns."
"Everything goes."
"So what then, Bowie?"
You stare at me from the pagee, a stranger, a man I've written several years without true knowing, I let it be that way, let you, let the rest, remain strange to me. I've done with breaking off pieces of myself, naming them, calling it fixtion.

You stare at me. One blue eye, one green eye.

"It wasn't always like that. They took over one."
"They?"
"The mushrooms. They kept one. I have . . . a replacement."
"Took one? Replacement?"
"Tonight an old village burns."
"Everything goes."
He nods. "Let me do my work now."

[Stray planks, all of it, stray planks on a wide foam, fingers cling, call up myths or guesses to travel the hours.]

Bowie calms. Lets it happen, lets it come, again.

[Tales of hid nests burnt in a bolt, a jaw's snap, an old blood vessel damned breaks & finally goes]

At dawn a young voice sings. How to listen new, breathe new, love new. Remember & better than remember. Empathy, curiosity.

Neither hope nor despair proof of the other.

"I'm gong to help. You wonder what we have in common, who we are. We're here to to sing & help."
"Sing . . . & help?"
"Both, they are the same"
"Each of you."
"I think so. It's not much but maybe it's what you need right now, to continue this. If conjuring the magical is too vague an idea then think: sing, & help."
"Help how? Help who"
"I'm going back now."

cxii.

Find music in a sheered heart's hour, it about sums this book in a half dozen words. Some eat others, I suppose you'd call that the rest.

That all? Center of the big puzzle? I wonder, & don't know. Would one sheered hour's confession have done for all? Can any three words no matter how solid & thumping, replace years, their shadows & serenades?

"Will, has the music dwindled to less or same, again I don't know. Men live in shifting quantities & percents of rhythm & novelty. So one writes, & writes, tries else, tries else's else, then writes more, writes & writes.

Wandering down into the bones of this book right now, it will sing as best I can, it will discover as my will persists, it will matter none, lightly or a great deal, given how much, how

good, how long my energy feeds & feeds it—

It matters, the new music, the *next* sheered heart's hour's music. Some eat others, & mine to witness, & cry out.

A new day by men's standards begins during this sentence, midnight, the world's panoply of sweet cruel bizarre & unspeakable pauses not a moment. Blood goes, & goes—

Again, find music in a sheered heart's hour, peculiar thrum in aching blood, sadness descending rhythms, music when warmth & light gone, shutting doors & grim knowing.

Bruised apples, the dented wall. Bowie snaps open a moment, everything looses, he floats out of time & space with this memory. It was a clue, a hard fucking clue Preacher left for him in the chicken shack & he saw it & missed it in his panic at what was happening. The wall was dented, like by a desperate fist, & an apple shoved into the splinters—what? what the fuck?

Nearly pulled back, remembering his bus ride down, "Some eat others" & his companion had added more to it—"Freddy, some eat others, slowly, because they can." Shit! Clues from Venus & Mars about how the human heart works in the deathly climes of Mercury. Something & no time to think it through. Carry it along, let a lot go to carry it along—

Nod, burn the canvas, let Art sparkle back to air, uncollect thought, unremark color, the raising snap in flesh & nature, sweet & suffering view of pine & cruisers —— Charlie, what he's doing? Burn the canvas, him? He's deep in still, the golden eagle coming to claim him but not yet—

he's told him to wait, he has something to do, these men want his only valuable, his blood canvases, they have to burn, it's all he has that they could want—

he can do this, nod & burn them one by one, they contain these instructions from him—burn its matter & every reason—he speaks

"Some eat others, & get hungrier for it"

Genes & chance number up the world why one man eats his meal in shade & another in tower. Why one man nods & another is shifted—

Jack tends her but his eyes still will not focus, he finds her water, balls up his dirty shirt as pillow beneath her head, talks softly to her, nearly croons, panic stretches his calm & tortures his heart but he bears her, bears her entirely—

why one man cuddles his God in coins & another cries out.

Preacher speaks in his ear:
Some eat others, with bullets,

with ideologies — — — look!

Yonder a clearing shaped like a temple, in full moonlight, all may pass through, none may stay. Some bring a long siren of wishes, collected in pages, girded in prejudice & artillery. An iron path & its result.

Dream! Maya: "some eat others, of their wills, of their mysteries"

Find dreams are blood & bone, maps & harvest, the flesh of every heartstrick hour's bony question.

Benny Big Dreams in top hat & tuxedo, long glowing cane, burned close in red fire, a grin to unsheave the sweetest of their finely cloaked shadows, consume it, it, the firey fleshly tight fine broad *it* cries merrily:

"Would you be sheared & chuted, or would you dream, perhaps know? What music does waking life's days partly make?"

Some eat others, says bluntly from the deep bones of this book, because they can, because they will, because you still sleep dumb.

Now climb from the bones, into the night's brilliant loon's hours, climb from the cave, the cellar, whatever the muck is, the stagger from a dollar's push to a fine fucking ass's distract—from silly mewl for God become choking years, climb til walking & then enough to run.

cxiii.

Blood & consequence, tell what else, what we are, what we do, I cannot pull from the flesh, from the bones themselves of things any else.

What we are, what we do, what matters is a hard 'during twist of both.

So what Maya, wherefrom? Bowie? Charlie Pigeonfoot? Genny? Jack? Dylan? Even Jazz? Who is Global Wall?

I sit in Red Dog Cafe's back room asking this & dissatisfied. Where has Red Dog been these many pages?

I am new of a kind to these pages, I've been broken off & thrust into them. I bear a name, Raymond, but what's new is this new aspect. For years he lived here & there both, now he has separated into a him up there, out there, whatever, & a me, here, this world. I'm an agent, I carry the *Labyrinthine* manuscript with me but I do not write it. He does, who I was part of, who I've separated from.

Who writes this then? He does, he writes this because it is within his pages. I am reading these words later, the pages filled. He was writing them & the next word was not yet written, & the one after that—I am reading this, later. Is that possible to explain better?

I have a notebook, a binder of blank sheets, & a black pen. I am given the tools to write on my own pages. Will they appear in his manuscript, & thus be part of his book? Yes they will, & no they are not. How is this?

I open the binder to its first sheet, & sit quietly at my table, & think. Breathe, relax. Write:

Blood & consequence, tell what else, what we are, what we do, I cannot pull from the flesh, from the bones themselves of things anything else.

I exist because I am told so, & believe it to be. I have nothing to show what I was a hundred years back or hence. My world combines myth & amnesia to avoid these questions.

So, existing. Newly come, in fact. Released fully into being from another, excised & let arrive in this place, a man not a baby, dressed, my black leather coat visible on that hook, & knowing it is my coat, & this binder of blank sheets, & this black pen. Holding also a manuscript called Labyrinthine *which is in a sense where I come from, & so I have two books, & a lovely jacket, & my language to speak & use this pen, & this world to move around in.*

I am here not to write a book like Labyrinthine. *It is narrative, meta-narrative, anti-narrative. Novel, anti-novel. No, I have other business to be about.*

The waitress is too sexy not to be admired. Long red hair, a strange flouncy yet tight blouse, a short leather miniskirt & long black tights. Sharp little boots. She looks slyly at my binder & my manuscript but asks no questions. I ask one. Her name.

"Call me Merry." She's hurried from me to an arriving crowd of portly toupéed businessmen, I resume my thought.

The one I came from won't tell anyone's stories properly. I intend to try. He will take care of the puzzles & philosophy, I will distinctly ask who & why.

Blood & consequence, he would take this phrase & laugh it wild & directionless toward any near cloud & I would say why has Bowie all his life been drawn into hidden places, looked for obscure stories, suspected what explained lay another direction from what was obvious. Like many another youth he ravages his share of full moonlight for his desire's answer but when the moon did not answer, once, twice, thrice, he stopped asking, realized he asked no question the moonlight could answer. So again look another direction or ask a new question. It took awhile, years, to learn how to ask, what asking meant, how it controlled & colored. Ask someone else's question & get someone else's answers, live with them, forget your own, or the effort, years go by, it matters less & then less, & more for an occasional hour, but then less again.

How to ask. Who to ask? A clue in an old Bob Dylan song, about an assassinated hero, how the assassin was only a pawn in their game. Whose game? Pawn toward what? A clue, not much more.

But he read more, & sometimes didn't read, walked night streets & woods & he allowed himself not to know, not to decide, to let a visible lay of himself stand for the whole. Kept his private maelstrom to himself.

His path to becoming a spy was tangled, a couple of moments when the surface & the maelstrom met, touched, collaborated, he knew that powerful men often had sought what he sought but then became distracted by power's accumulation itself.

How this did not happen to him too was not will but luck. It was Preacher.

Preacher had another name back then but so did Bowie. Neither matter now. Preacher & Bowie were not originally partners, they drew nearer each other over a long stretch.

Preacher didn't care about men's usual ideas of power & he appreciated Bowie's "romantic crush on the hidden" as he called it, but he saw no romance in any of it.

"You say powerful men lose their way by drinking too much of their own power, by falling

into mirrors & so on. I'd say it's more often fear. No romance deep in things, no human reason or sentiment either. We are not our own roots, as the earth grows many kinds of things & there are many kinds of earth."

Bowie listened, resisted less over time because Preacher was not telling him what to think so much as sharping his mind's capacity to think.

"It's not simple or even complex cogitation that gets us somewhere, Garrish. Certainly not the human heart! Human heart! Distracting us from our repetitive days & scant chances!

"No. It's the imagination. The continent, the cosmos of imagination." He'd nod, perform this speech often but stop with little variation at this point.

"Do you mean Art? Do you mean Dreams? Love?"

"Eat this," frowning. "Eat it, now! Now sit over on that couch, by the window. Chew slowly & watch the streetlamp. Good, I think you'll talk to me in awhile & there will be few questions & answers between us."

There was a moment, years later, Jack felt something waning in him, it was what turned him from one into another. He was nearly married, nearly become a father, playing with his nephew small enough stripling yet to toss through the autumn air like a football, Jack loved this boy, loved him as he had loved his grandfather, learned from him, but this moment led him away, let him toward Penny Xtina whichever both he cradled in his arms now, led him away from her too for a time, long before he stepped through the window back at the S & G Pizza—

Blood & consequence, what else—

For a moment raising up a small heartbeat was good, enough, the world itself, worlds on end, & then another moment, & a countless stretch beyond that one & he became another, not so much like shedding skins as some call it but passing through space while it differently occupied him one hour or another, & hours themselves shifted—

Blood & consequence, hearts dearest treasures in raw old frames, great calls for new brotherhood or centuries of marching faces with God in their chambers ("hey, think if God is a woman like them feminazis say, think she blows good in bed?" "blows who? her wife? she ain't blowing you no time soon!"), & a thousand thousand grey & roseate hours alike when bodies needless cry & fall ("look, I'm just saying!" "Yah, man, get yourself a rubber dolly!" "He should get a rubber nun!" "Now there's an idea! Stuff it with your stake!")

Blood & consequence, the room ruby with candlelight, a small pink radio smiles & reports the next war ("that radio is in about half a dozen different places" "Yah, I made up a map" "Nice! What program did you use?" "I just drew it freestyle") (Maya misses her radio & sometimes imagines it's with her, maybe that she & Dylan & even John are listening to it on Dylan's bed, that long ago night—but who would she fuck then? The boy, her heart's wish, her smile's fancy, her secret soft treat, or the man who would handle her a bit roughly & call her another name as he took her down? Who would confuse her with Marie & what Marie liked & what Marie wanted & how Marie sated him, would she let him, take him, take it, the dirty blazing IT he saved for her, take IT & enjoy IT because she cannot fucking HANDLE being the FUCKING KEY or CONDUIT or SECRET VIRGIN COSMIC COSMIC PUSSY of this

fucking fixtion book thing! One pink radio, one lover boy, some nice clothes to make them both happy going on & coming off.

"No"

"What?"

"No, Samantha. Stop this. Can you?"

"It doesn't stop, Maya. Nothing stops."

"What's wanted? What do I do?"

"Keep going? Find out more?"

"Can I take over? Can I steer it? Can I crash it into a wall? Can I drive it into the ocean where we met & drown it, & take you and Dylan away? And take John by his horns to Marie? Why him, not us?"

"Who?"

"Him! The one with the pen, who just turned the page to write what I'm saying! Hey!"

"I'm there too, Maya. A part broke off, lives there, somewhere."

"Where do I find him?"

"Follow Samantha."

—rooted dumb helpless in the hidden, mystic singing math twining all, preacher & scientist, symbol & molecule, king's powerful, dying fist & eager virgin's shade across a tavern's earthen hilarity.

"What now?"
"Now?"
"We came to you. We're here. What now?"
"You ask like I have a plan."
"You always had one. We followed you. Now I'm it. Tweety & me. We're your harem."
"Harem."
"Yah, sorry, old joke."
"I asked nobody to follow. I begged none join in it. I knew what I had to find. Others came along. I couldn't explain it so I didn't."
"What did you have to find?"
"A man. My friend. A girl too. A place."
"Who?"
"Yes, who. Who was I when you met me? When you thrust your ideas over me, & followed them?"
"I'll help you. You know I will. I always tried."
"I know. That's why you remain. The rest wanted something but not to help. They're gone now."
"Where?"
"Does it matter, Aquarius?"
Ginny starts hard, nearly falls over her stool. She remembers suddenly, badly. He gave them names, as though somehow reminding them. Aquarius was hers, given like she'd carelessly forgotten.

He stands, moves toward the great swinging door into the cafe's band room, & elsewhere she knew. Walked through, did not look back. She, they, followed. One less willing.

Blood & consequence, the years scar the night's every glance, each fine & careless word, dreams unheeded gruesome with hard, strange counsel no sage has spoke.

Is Charlie aloft now? Is that him? Or is he dreaming?
O hh h h h h h
It's all acid. Golden eagle too.
We're buried in its world.

"All chips at faith," writes Cosmic Early tonight, coughing, "til one day a mound of ashes in a fargone world," coughing harder, "or a work no man denies & nature might allow" slumps lower. "Benny. Benny, help. *Benny, help. Bennyhelpbennyhelpbennyhelp*"

Revolution By Night
Revolution By Night
Revolution By Night
Revolution By Night
Revolution By Night
Revolution By Night

To be continued in Cenacle | *76* | *December 2010*

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Charles Shaw

Born Illegal: Alexander Shulgin's Psychedelic "Children"

Posted on October 1, 2010 at Alternet.org | http://www.alternet.org/story/148368/

By all accounts, Anthony Reed was what you would have called a model citizen. In a very traditional sense, he was a hardworking young man looking at a very bright future. He attended an exclusive boarding school for gifted students, and after posting a near-perfect score on the ACT and a 3.7 GPA at Louisiana Tech University, he found himself wooed by graduate programs across the country. Rather than go straight to grad school, though, Reed felt it was his obligation to volunteer a portion of his most able-bodied years to what he called "the betterment of society." He applied for an AmeriCorps post, and was quickly accepted and dispatched to the Berkshires in Massachusetts to begin work on a conservation project that helped maintain federally protected land.

In mid-April of this year, the 22-year-old Reed took a well-deserved break and drove to the Wanee Music Festival in Live Oak, Florida. He brought with him gallons of homemade gumbo that he and a friend planned to give away, and three small doses of an obscure psychedelic compound known as "2C-I." Each 10 mg dose was just enough for a stimulant effect, according to Reed, to keep him awake and dancing all night to Government Mule, Widespread Panic, and the Allman Brothers Band.

Reed was introduced to psychedelics sometime in his sophomore year of college, where he was very active on campus and maintained a high GPA, all the while choosing to smoke marijuana instead of doing "the typical college drinking thing." He already knew marijuana was not the "evil, dangerous drug people portrayed it to be."

"My experimentation with psychedelics came as a result of the same understanding I went through with marijuana . . . if I had been lied to my whole life about that, I figured I'd find out what else I was lied to about."

Reed was interested in exploring psychedelics and researched a number of them on Erowid.org, the free and extensive Internet archive of psychoactive substances that contains thousands of anonymous reports of the effects of various substances. After some basic experimentation with LSD, Reed came to many profound realizations that fundamentally changed his life and worldview: "I feel like I got a boost of motivation and developed my own understanding of how I relate to the rest of the universe and what part I play in this world."

He shared his experiences anonymously on Erowid, and soon began exploring more compounds, learning about the 2C drugs. He was looking for something that had the potential "to give me other perspectives I had not otherwise experienced on LSD."

Reed first heard of 2C-I by reading the experience reports on Erowid, and the book *PIHKAL*, an archive of psychedelic compounds created by Dr. Alexander "Sasha" Shulgin—a

former research chemist for Dow Chemical who is best known for introducing MDMA to psychedelic culture, and who was also the inventor of 2C-I. Reed felt he made an informed decision that 2C-I was safe to try. No deaths had ever been reported on the substance.

"It also had the benefit, so I thought, of keeping me out of trouble."

Reed believed it was not against the law to possess 2C-I since it is an "unscheduled" compound, meaning it does not appear on the federal schedule (or ranking system) of Controlled Substances, nor is it explicitly made illegal in any known law. This makes it technically "not-illegal." This distinction was critical to Reed, because he had worked too hard to jeopardize everything he had going for him to risk getting busted for possession of illegal drugs.

That measure of security would prove to be chimerical.

Expecting only 10,000 people, the festival was overwhelmed when three times that number flowed through the gates. In response, like flies to a bloated carcass, it also appears that a commensurate number of undercover police officers joined in. Word quickly began to circulate about the sheer number of cops among them, and the equally audacious number of people getting busted for what seemed like ultra-petty offenses like smoking pot.

Pot busts are extremely rare at major music festivals like this one, where smoking in the open is *de rigueur*. The conventional wisdom has been that these festivals provide safe containers for minor drug use, and the logistics of hauling out petty offenders to face misdemeanor busts was too cumbersome for zealous enforcement. Not so at Wanee, where it seemed like the police were out for blood (or, at the very least, bank).

After the Allman Brothers set, Reed and two friends left the main stage and were hanging out together in a darker, quieter area of the festival grounds, when a young man approached them and struck up a conversation. At gatherings like these, this is not at all out of character.

"We started talking about music we like, and he mentioned Phish and STS9. He started naming individual shows, like the Rothbury (Michigan) STS9 show in 2008, which we both agreed was amazing. We connected immediately."

Appearing as if he might be fishing (or Phishing, as the case may be) for a hook-up, about a half hour later the stranger says, "It just sucks. I got some bunk tabs earlier. I wish I could find something here that wasn't fucking bunk. You guys know where to get any molly (MDMA)?" This too is not an unfamiliar practice at festivals, which, the police would argue, is why their presence is justified.

"I told him that I didn't have any molly, but I had this one 2C-I pill left. He seemed curious so I explained to him what it was. He begged me to let him buy it, so I let him have it. He offered me ten dollars for it. I shrugged and took it. As soon as that happened, BAM! He grabbed my arm, and told me that I had sold to an undercover."

Reed maintained a level head though, did not struggle, and pleaded his innocence while remaining calm and avoiding the stupid kinds of self-incrimination most fall into once confronted by police. He informed the undercover and his Sergeant that the substance they took from him was not illegal. They were having none of it. They charged him with "sale of MDMA" and "possession of MDMA with intent to distribute." In other words, they not only set him up, and got the charge wrong, but they called him a drug dealer too.

"I told the undercover the charges wouldn't stick," Reed said.

He also claims the sergeant told the undercover that he could let Reed go, and that the only way Reed might have broken the law is if he sold the 2C-I in "lieu of MDMA" as if he

tried to pass it off as MDMA.

"That's exactly what he did," the undercover told his superior.

Reed was incensed, and protested, but they laughed him off. It was only the beginning. He must have felt like he was in an alternate universe when the police later informed him that his 2C-I "field tested positive for MDMA."

Whether this was true, or whether it was simply a charge that would stick, the net result was that Reed, the ostensibly well-read, law-abiding, volunteer civil servant, was now facing a felony bust, and the end of that promising future.

2C, or not 2C . . . that is the question

How is it that a purportedly legal substance (or, at the very least, one that is not explicitly illegal) garners a felony bust? Perhaps we should begin by taking a look at the mysterious compound that caused all the trouble.

2C-I (or 2,5-dimethoxy-4-iodophenethylamine) belongs to a family of twenty-nine "2C" compounds (which include the more notable 2C-B, 2C-E, and 2C-T-7) that are designated Schedule I or "dangerous with a high abuse potential and no known or accepted medicinal applications." All of these compounds were invented ("synthesized" is how the chemists put it) by Shulgin.

Of course, that's just the government talking, so you know where to rank their opinion. They say the same thing about marijuana, LSD, peyote, psilocybin, and DMT, none of which are addictive in the strict sense of the word, even though arguably marijuana can and does produce some "psychological dependency." As to whether any of these substances are dangerous, well, that's really all in how you define "dangerous."

Psychedelics are certainly considered dangerous by the powers that be, but not because of any imminent physical harm; it's their perceived power to up-end the social order that is the real threat. But forty years after that particular breed of hysteria swept the nation, the scientific establishment is quickly reversing their opinions on much of this fear-mongering. Let us remember that most these substances have been used as traditional medicines for thousands of years, and too much of anything is no good. Even ancient tribes had their rules and regulations, and the shamans usually lived on the fringes of society.

The 2C drugs are psychedelic compounds that some classify as "entheogenic," or substances that facilitate spiritual experiences. Sasha, as a scientist, prefers the term "psychedelic," derived from the Greek word for "mind-manifesting." These substances are mostly found in the self-described "psychonaut" or consciousness-expanding culture, but regularly pop-up in rave culture as well—particularly 2C-B, which is as common as MDMA in many rave circles.

2C-B is used as a healing sacrament by some indigenous South African tribes. 2C-B is the active ingredient of a semi-synthetic "herbal" compound called "Ubulawu Nomathotholo" or the "Medicine of the Singing Ancestors." What makes this unique is that in this case shamanic healers chose this semi-synthetic over their traditional healing plants.

The 2C compounds produce a wide range of effects. Some are highly visual, while some are deeply introspective. Others enhance cognition or have primarily emotional effects. Many have few overt psychedelic effects at all. They are generally less potent and shorter acting than other more well known psychedelics.

2C-B is known as a sensual, tactile drug, often referred to as an "aphrodisiac." 2C-T-7

is called "7th Heaven" because it tends to produce states of enlightenment. 2C-E is known as "the teacher" because it promotes optimism, thoughtfulness, and creativity. 2C-I is a more traditional, overtly LSD-like psychedelic, tending to be more visual and intellectual.

"The story of the 2C compounds," says chemist Paul Daley, co-author with Sasha Shulgin and Tania Manning of *The Shulgin Index: Psychedelic Phenethylamines & Related Compounds*, "really starts with the first attempts to modify known naturally occurring psychedelics, to change their activity. This began in 1949 with the creation of the first synthetic analog of mescaline."

Mescaline, the principle active agent in peyote, was the first known psychedelic. Its use goes back over 7,000 years. It belongs to a family of compounds known as "phenethylamines," which include the 2C family and more well-known drugs like MDMA, MDA, amphetamine, anti-depressants like Wellbutrin and Effexor, and essential amino acids like L-tyrosine. Phenethylamines are structurally close to dopamine, which is naturally occurring in the brain, and is involved with the sensing of pleasure and "reward." Phenethylamines are thought to be involved in the drive to repeat dosing with drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines, which stimulate dopamine receptors in the brain.

Until the 20th century, mescaline and cannabis were the only known drugs that were considered "psychedelic" (cannabis has mostly freed itself of this misclassification, although many assert that in the context of "mind-manifesting" it is a classic "psychedelic"). As of the passage of the Controlled Substances Act in 1970, there were another 150 known psychedelics, eleven of which including those mentioned above ended up on the federal drug schedule. This had the single largest impact on drug policy, because it took down the titans of psychedelia and began the 40-year dark-age where legal scientific exploration of these compounds nearly ground to a halt.

As we enter the second decade of the new millennium, *The Shulgin Index* identifies some 1350 known compounds, of which roughly a third have been tested on humans and proven as psychoactive. Shulgin is credited with many of their discoveries as well.

Each of these enumerate phenethylamine compounds, sometimes referred to as "Sasha's children," are catalogued in *PIHKAL*, (*Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved*). This remarkable work of science and psychology by Shulgin and his wife Ann is a book for the ages. It also brought them no end of grief, or adulation, for daring to publish the results of their lifelong "relationship" with their "children."

Paul Daley is part of a core group of people referred to as Team Shulgin by their friends, who help Ann and Sasha to carry on the legacy of their work. Team Shulgin includes Ann's daughter Wendy Tucker, who edited *PIHKAL* and the sequel, *TIHKAL* (*Tryptamines I Have Known And Loved*), and is the head of Transform Press, the publisher of Shulgin books; and Greg and Tania Manning, the Shulgin researchers/writers/archivists/personal assistants who live, work, and travel with them. An honorable mention goes to Earth and Fire Erowid, co-founders of their eponymously named website, who the Shulgins call "trusted family." Erowid is the largest drug info library in the world, and they have posted large sections of both Shulgin books, *PIHKAL* and *TIHKAL* (which I affectionately refer to as "Pickle-Tickle").

Atop Shulgin Hill

Ann and Sasha's hilltop home east of the San Francisco Bay bears all the traits of a hid-

den sanctuary. It's located off a tiny road named "Shulgin Lane" along a winding highway that straddles the hills around Mount Diablo. The modest ranch-style house is tucked in the fold of a hill, shrouded beneath an ancient grove of trees. Beside the house lies a short path that leads to Sasha's laboratory, the most well-known, and revered, part of the property. This 10x20 foot wood and corrugated metal shack is to many around the world a holy site, a place where divine spiritual energy was distilled from the ether, concentrated into molecules, and given unto humanity through the work of a chemical prophet.

Hyperbole aside, calling the Shulgins prophets is not that big a stretch of the imagination. Their books have touched millions of lives through their naked and fearless exploration of the human psyche, and their most intimate life moments. More than that, the canon of compounds Sasha created has been at the core of a psychedelic revolution many years in the making that is just now re-emerging with force. This time, however, the revolution comes with bona fides, slowly walking hand in hand with policy and medicine. Timothy Leary may have been the mad prophet of modern psychonaut culture, as much as Albert Hofmann was their Werner Von Braun. But Sasha and Ann are Adam & Eve; for it was they, in a manner of speaking, who first dared to taste of the molecular tree of knowledge.

"Being an organic, medicinal chemist is a bit like chemistry bifurcated from alchemy," offers Paul Daley.

Still, for all the chemical wizardry, there is more doctor in their efforts than alchemist. In the traditional practice of making medicines, the chemist would first extract a compound from natural sources, like plants or fungi. Once the molecular structure of that compound was determined, the chemist would make modifications (consisting of moving certain atoms around the core rings of the structure) based upon certain hypotheses: *We can make this drug work faster by making it more fat-soluble, by having it cross the blood-brain barrier faster, etc.*

This was the precise approach Sasha took in all his work, which became known as The Shulgin Method. It is to make hypotheses about a group of closely related chemical structures, and then make the actual compounds, and then test them to evaluate their action. Sasha tested through self-experimentation. He would start with tiny doses, then wait a few days, double the dose, then wait a few days, repeat, repeat. He and Ann would measure every aspect of the experience, the medical and physiological effects, the psychological and social effects, slowly and systematically increasing the dose until he reached the point where "the true nature of the compound revealed itself."

Anthony Reed has great respect for Sasha Shulgin. It fits, both are legitimate overachievers defined by open minds and compassionate hearts, and both got into trouble when they wandered into the legal gray zone of "designer drugs." Of course, it was Shulgin himself who was the original "designer," and no one knew it was a gray zone until he pioneered his way in there and opened Pandora's Box, or discovered the Philosopher's Stone, depending on your point of view.

In response to Sasha's "crimes"—which amount to indulging in the spirit of scientific discovery with a DEA license, and having a Promethean need to disseminate the results—his lab has been raided three times, twice by the DEA, and once by local authorities. This all but forced Sasha to give up his license to study illicit substances (although it wasn't revoked as many believe, but rather it was a "voluntary relinquishment").

The raids, and his designation as the "Godfather of Psychedelics," brought negative media attention and the kinds of itinerant pleasure seekers who thought Sasha's lab would be

Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution

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the new Millbrook with wild experimentation in every corner. The Shulgins prefer to stay out of the limelight. After a lifetime devoted to scientific exploration and the betterment of humanity, which they downloaded into their books, they recently appeared in *Dirty Pictures*, an exceptional documentary by Etienne Sauret about "Ann and Sasha's lifelong quest to unlock the complexities of the human mind."

Ann and Sasha are now in their twilight years, and Sasha's health is precarious. Because of this, they value their privacy, and precious time with their family. This is why, with few exceptions they no longer grant interviews. When they do, its usually because they have something important to say, and because they trust the messenger.

Prohibition is one of those topics on which they have much to say. The unfortunate side effect of drug prohibition is that the legitimate, objective evaluation of all of "Sasha's children" for the betterment of humanity has, at the very least, been derided and discredited, and in some cases, been made impossible. This means that the 2C compounds, and so many of the other phenethylamines, have never been properly evaluated, for either their positive or negative properties.

"Some of them might have amazing potential for medicinal, psychological or spiritual growth and healing," Paul Daley muses, then shrugs. "Under prohibition, certainly as it exists today, we'll never know."

A quick look around the circle reveals unanimous confirmation. There is so much these people could accomplish if set free to explore again. It is *tragic* to think of the sheer brainpower that is going to waste, but that's a minor sacrifice when judged against those who have lost their freedom fighting for their cognitive liberty. In this context, Sasha and the rest of Team Shulgin understand his historical role quite differently. Not only are they deeply hurt by the lost knowledge caused by the 40-year dark age, they are devastated by the lost lives. Because of the War on Drugs, the compounds Sasha discovered in pursuit of beneficent human evolution have instead led paradoxically to the arrest, incarceration, and often immiseration, of so many promising souls.

What may be worse is that, as a direct consequence of Sasha's work, drug laws were greatly expanded in 1986 under the Federal Analogue Act. This sweeping piece of legislation was enacted after a legal explosion in MDMA production during the mid-1980s. MDMA wasn't explicitly illegal before 1986, so once it took hold in the culture it proliferated with the swiftness of the gods, scaring the bejeezus out of conservative America . . . as all of these spiritual, loving, hyper-perceptive compounds tend to do when they first roll into town.

Seeing What They Want 2C: The Controlled Substance Analogue Enforcement Act of 1986

2C-I is not explicitly illegal, but that doesn't mean it is legal either. Confusing? Of course it is, it's American drug policy.

The Controlled Substance Analogue Enforcement Act was kind of like the Patriot Act for drugs. It made sure that any chemical compound even marginally similar to any scheduled compound was itself illegal, even if it hadn't yet been synthesized and in effect existed only in theory.

According to Erowid, the Analogue Act (sometimes referred to as the "Designer Drug Law") was explicitly enacted to allow the DEA to arrest and prosecute underground chemists

who make minor changes to an existing illegal and/or scheduled substance, resulting in a new substance that can be sold as a recreational drug with the same or similar effects, but which is not specifically listed as illegal. Shulgin does not qualify here, since everything he did was legal and licensed, and as Paul Daley points out, "Sasha's motivation was scientific and medical; quite different from a clandestine chemist seeking to make a buck." The broadness and vagueness of the law makes it "one of the most oppressive laws ever written, making the very creation of a new, unknown and untested chemical, illegal." Even if the substance isn't psychoactive, it's still born illegal.

"It's the same with nuclear weapons technology," Daley continues. "Any as yet uninvented piece of nuclear technology immediately becomes classified the second it is created. It's born classified."

This situation is not widely known, and so it often leads to situations, like with Anthony Reed, in which people believe they are engaging in lawful, or at least "not-illegal" behavior, when in fact they are breaking the law and putting themselves and others at risk.

"I didn't think 2C-I was legal, *per se*, but I knew it existed in a gray area," Reed admits.

He knew more than that. This is a careful kid, and he had good reason to be. This was not the first time he was involved in an egregious abuse of authority and miscarriage of justice.

When Reed was 16, he underwent major gall bladder surgery and during his recovery used marijuana, with his doctor's knowledge, to help him eat. By his late teens, he had become an advocate for marijuana reform. On Mar 26, 2009 he became something of a household name amongst the marijuana reform community when he published "Let's have an honest talk about marijuana" on the liberal website Daily Kos, and it rocketed into mega-traffic status, garnering over 1100 comments.

Less than a month later Reed's Louisiana home was raided by twelve squad cars full of heavily armed drug interdiction cops from the Lincoln Parish Narcotics Enforcement Team. Reed and his ex-wife were home at the time. It turns out Reed's marijuana supplier, who had prior convictions, got pinched and gave up the names of all his clients, including Reed, in an attempt to stay out of prison. With such a high-profile article about marijuana in circulation, many speculated that the police thought Reed was some kind of weed kingpin and used it as justification for the severity of the raid.

In spite of the firepower, all the police found was a small discarded Ziploc bag with a few stems and seeds. Nonetheless, Reed was charged with "misdemeanor possession of marijuana." He appealed to the Daily Kos community for help and was able to raise enough funds to hire a lawyer, who was provided by Keith Stroup, the erstwhile founder of NORML.

From that moment forward, Reed made it his business to know every legal angle when it came to drugs. In choosing to travel across state lines to attend Wanee, he made sure that Florida did not have an Analogue Act. Even if it did, he assumed it was unlikely he would be prosecuted, especially for a possession-level offenses. Only a handful of successful prosecutions had ever emerged from the Federal Analogue Act, "and those were for major suppliers," Reed explained.

The most successful prosecution under the Analogue Act was probably Operation Web Tryp, which went down on July 21, 2004. Five websites involved in the widespread sale of "grey market" drugs—unregulated tryptamines and phenethylamines ("Sasha's children")—were shut down and ten people were charged. Following this bust, 2C-T-7 and a few other compounds were explicitly made Schedule 1.

The charges stuck in Operation Web Tryp because the websites explicitly stated the chemicals they sold were for human consumption, a stipulation of the Analogue Act that was reinforced after *USA v. Damon S. Forbes* et al., the 1992 case that challenged the legality of the Analogue Act. In the ruling handed down by the US District Court of Colorado, the government's definition of "analogue" provided "neither fair warning nor effective safeguards against arbitrary enforcement" and so the law was voided for its "vagueness." The ruling made clear that the burden of proof was on the government to show that the chemicals in question were specifically intended for human consumption if any prosecution under the Federal Analog Act was to occur.

Of course, not knowing all this history or policy can be excused in young people experimenting with their own consciousness, but there is less room for error in those who actually have the knowledge and wherewithal to synthesize analog compounds, or who are advocating their use to others. At an Evolver Regional event in Long Beach last March where I was a speaker a young man held up a copy of *PIHKAL* and said something to the effect of, "Sasha has left us his cookbook, and all we need do is learn how to make his recipes. These substances are 100 percent legal!"

He had never heard of the Analogue Act. He obviously had also not read the book, because right in the opening pages you will find the following:

> *I would like to take a moment to reiterate that at the present time restrictive laws are in force in the United States and it is very difficult for researchers to abide by the regulations which govern efforts to obtain legal approval to do work with these compounds in human beings . . . . No one who is lacking legal authorization should attempt the synthesis of any of the compounds described in these files, with the intent to give them to man. To do so is to risk legal action which might lead to the tragic ruination of a life. It should also be noted that any person anywhere who experiments on himself, or on another human being, with any of the drugs described herein, without being familiar with that drug's action and aware of the physical and/or mental disturbance or harm it might cause, is acting irresponsibly and immorally, whether or not he is doing so within the bounds of the law.*

"The reality of life with Ann & Sasha is quite different from the misguided myths about them," Greg Manning offers. "They do not work with, stockpile or provide illegal substances . . . period."

There is also no use or experimentation allowed on Shulgin property. In spite of this, and seemingly without any concern for the well-being of those they purport to worship, at least half a dozen people asked me to procure them some compound or other the next time I visit Ann & Sasha.

What most boggles Team Shulgin is that most people don't understand the position Ann and Sasha are in, and don't consider for a moment how they might be putting the two in jeopardy.

Wrapping up the conversation, I ask Sasha how he knew that what he was ingesting all those times wouldn't kill him.

"I didn't."

"So, you were just blindly testing what could have been fatally toxic compounds?"

"Yes. If you think it might kill you, take a smaller dose."

It's classic Sasha, sending everyone into peals of laughter.

"The poison," Paul Daley nods, "is always in the dose."

Menace to Society Safely Neutralized

It is now six months later, and Anthony Reed is serving 24 months on felony probation. Although the MDMA charges were eventually dropped when the lab's toxicology test confirmed he was in possession of an "unscheduled compound," since Florida does not have an Analogue law, he was convicted of (get this) "sale of a counterfeit controlled substance." That's like getting a felony for selling someone a dime bag of drywall. He has lost his AmeriCorps post. He can no longer apply to graduate school because his conviction made him ineligible for financial aid, and he can no longer go to medical school ever because he has a drug conviction.

Anthony had "enormous" trouble finding a job because he was forced to tell prospective employers that he is a convicted felon. Not an honors student, not a scholarship winner, not an AmeriCorps volunteer, not even a "decent law-abiding citizen." He's now struggling to get by as a car salesman during the worst recession in 70 years, working to pay off thousands in fines and court costs, lawyer fees, drug tests, and more.

Anthony Reed is the kind of person we want running the world when we are old, but instead, he is now another of the millions of nameless, faceless, unemployable criminals that inhabit the exile nation. He was a straight shooter, and he played by the rules, and the rules failed him. So it goes in this through-the-looking glass war on plants, chemicals, and people.

Still, Reed remains stoic in the face of his daunting new reality.

"Don't for one second believe that this was all an innocent 'oops.' Its more fundamental than that. I knew exactly what I was getting into and have no regrets. I wouldn't be the same person today if this hadn't happened. I even developed my own sense of spirituality from all of this. I was never completely unaware at any point in my life about the legality or consequences of what I was doing. They were very personal decisions."

He had many grand plans for his life, and still does, but he now understands he will have to find different avenues to opportunity, and leap hurdles all the way. He still praises psychedelics, though, professing that they gave him the ability to roll with the punches.

"I see that there are so many ways to make your mark on the world. This was meant to be, and perhaps this is one of the ways I can make a difference."

He pauses.

"It's just the story of a little injustice, in a world filled with it."

* * * * * *

Notes on Contributors

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His poetry last appeared in *Cenacle* | 73-74 | Summer 2010. He climbs high in the Middlesex Fells to see ever further.

Judih Haggai lives in Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle.* Some mornings, during my recent joblessness, we have talked by video chat, & thus my days have gone better.

Horse Lampner lives in New England. His story in this issue, written around 1950, is his first in this periodical. He once worked in a store like the one he describes.

Martina Newberry lives in Palm Springs, California, with her husband Brian. This issue marks her first appearance in *The Cenacle*. Her website is http://rollwiththechanges.org.

Charles Shaw lives in San Francisco, California. He is the author of *Exile Nation: Drugs, Prisons, Politics, and Spirituality*, Charles can be connected with online at http://www.facebook.com/pages/Charles-Shaws-Exile-Nation/194774346777.

Kassandra Soulard lives in Arlington, Massachusetts. For Halloween, she dressed up as a hipster witch. Call any man luckier than me . . . I dare you . . .

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Arlington, Massachusetts, in a body still healthy & a mind sometimes happier for its great strangeness . . .

Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor lives north of Boston, Massachusetts. Her poetry last appeared in *Cenacle* | 73-74 | Summer 2010. Her poem "Cat Walk" is something of a miracle.

"Our imagination is the sail of the soul"
--Terence McKenna